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General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2018, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Santos Maraver (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Varela Rodríguez (*spoke in Spanish*): I extend my greetings to the President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, whom I wish to recognize as the first Latin American woman to serve the United Nations in this capacity.

I also recognize Secretary-General António Guterres for his renewed commitment to the Organization. To the people of Panama, I express once again, from this rostrum, my gratitude for having been given the opportunity to serve them.

As I return to the General Assembly for the seventh time, I am drawing to a close my chapter as Head of State. In just a few months, I will open a new one as a citizen of the world, but one who is determined to continue supporting the efforts of this institution, fighting for peace and social justice and following the example of great leaders like Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan.

Over these years, I have borne witness to the deliberations and efforts of the United Nations aimed at fostering harmony in the world. Some of the leaders I have listened to in this Hall are no longer with us; some left in peace and others in violent circumstances.

We have achieved ambitious goals, from the approval of the Sustainable Development Goals to the commitment to fulfilling them by 2030. Many challenges remain, such as achieving peace in Syria. The theme of the present session spurs us to reflect on the following question: are we as leaders doing enough for the Organization to have a real impact on people's lives? The answer lies in the commitment of those of us entrusted with the leadership of our countries as we enter the future.

The Organization was founded on the conviction that world leaders should be able to forge a path to resolve disputes by peaceful means. As we attend this annual gathering, we bear the responsibility to realize that dream of peace and brotherhood. Peace is threatened not only by weapons but also by injustice, poverty, hunger, inequality and the lack of opportunity experienced by our people. Therefore, as part of our commitment in adopting the Sustainable Development Goals as national policy, our Government has, over the

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past four years, made steady progress towards attaining them. We have rebuilt entire cities, and more than 100,000 Panamanian families will have new homes so that their children may lead a life of dignity.

Through a massive health census, we have identified the principal diseases affecting our citizens, allowing us to provide preventive health treatment.

We are transforming the Panamanian education system, making it bilingual and more equitable. More than 6,000 Panamanian teachers have been trained abroad to teach English and more than 3,000 new classrooms are being built for our students. Moreover, we have strengthened the system of higher technical education. I am very proud to share with the Assembly the fact that, as we speak, a team of Panamanian instructors is teaching English to Syrian refugee children in the Za'atari camp in Jordan.

Thanks to record investments, we are providing modern sanitation systems to several cities across the country and building new water-treatment plants to markedly expand access to drinking water. We lead Latin America in terms of investment in urban mobility, with 2,000 kilometres of new roads, and 22 kilometres of metro about to become operational and construction beginning on a further 26 kilometres. We have cut insecurity by 50 per cent, rescued thousands of young people from criminal gangs, and strengthened the capacities of law enforcement.

Today's Panama is very different from the country whose leadership I assumed in 2014. Before all Panamanians and the entire world, today I can say with my head held high that we have succeeded in transforming politics into public service and in rebuilding our democracy to be one that works for future generations. I have governed my country in peace, using dialogue and consensus, invoking the power of the State only to protect the people, not to thwart them. I have held true to the words I spoke on my first day in office by fighting corruption head on and ensuring that no one is above the law.

Many challenges remain ahead. The judicial system still faces significant challenges to ensure that there is no impunity. We have worked tirelessly to strengthen our institutions and consolidate our young democracy, respecting and supporting the elected authorities from all political parties and their communities, and boosting their economic capacities.

Next year, Panama will hold its seventh democratic elections, with an electoral body that has proven an effective guarantor of transparent democracy. Thanks to the far-reaching electoral reforms that we have pursued, the forthcoming campaign will be the fairest, shortest and most transparent in our history. For the first time, all responsibility for the financing of media campaigns will lie with the State.

We continue to strengthen our status as a connected country, with excellent aviation links, strengthened by a new airport; maritime connectivity, enhanced by the expanded Canal and new ports; and human connectivity, whereby our geographical position and facilities such as a new convention centre and cruise port will play an important role. We have a logistics and financial platform at the service of global trade, and we defend and protect it so as to ensure that it is not used for illicit activities. We have seen the successful expansion of the Canal, which reflects the principles of our country: our ability to unite the world, our permanent neutrality and our openness to global trade. This interoceanic link was restored to the people of Panama thanks to the Panama Canal treaties and the courageous decision of a simple human being, former President of the United States Jimmy Carter, whose commitment, I publicly acknowledge today, changed the course of our nation's history.

While we have experienced difficult situations that have affected our national image, we have been able to move on based on the principle that justice becomes unjust when it ceases to protect the innocent. We have demonstrated to the world that our country and its economy have succeeded thanks solely to the honest work of our people. Through our efforts in recent years to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, we have lifted more than 150,000 Panamanians out of poverty, which means a reduction of 5 percentage points, from 25 to 20 per cent, and maintained average annual economic growth of 5 per cent. We are strengthening the social protection system for the elderly and students. We have made major improvements to hospital infrastructure, education, school attendance, access to drinking water, education and housing.

We have also extended a dignified welcome to tens of thousands of citizens from other countries who have come to our land seeking a better future for their families. We witnessed the migratory crisis whereby more than 100,000 Haitians left for Brazil following the big earthquake in January 2010. Once in Brazil,

they were forced to migrate yet again as a result of the economic crisis there. Many lives were lost along the way. I recognize the leadership displayed by Chile in solving this human tragedy by opening its doors.

I see the tragedy of migration in the face of Juan, a 7-year-old African boy who now lives alone in Panama because he lost his mother as they walked across the mountains between Panama and Colombia. That child forged in the depths of my heart a commitment that countries must better manage migratory flows, in a more organized manner, while respecting the rights of all human beings to seek better living conditions. Thousands of migrants from other continents cross our border with Colombia through the dangerous Darién jungle, risking their lives in the hope of realizing their dreams. The lessons learned from these migratory crises compel us to call vigorously once again on the Government of Venezuela to restore political dialogue and a peaceful society based on democracy, so as to avoid further mass migration and the humanitarian crisis of Venezuelans seeking to meet their basic needs.

Such migratory flows can be stemmed only by eliminating the reasons for which citizens leave their countries, risking their safety and that of their families. That represents a significant challenge for the United Nations. We actively participated in the development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, to be adopted under the auspices of the United Nations this year, with the aim of contributing, based on our experience, to the global framework for tackling such crises. Our countries bear a responsibility to develop policies to manage migratory flows in an orderly manner with respect for human dignity. In the coming days, Panama will announce humanitarian measures to support the Venezuelan families residing in our country.

Panama is a great melting pot, comprising citizens from the world over who came and made a new home in our beautiful land. We have learned to live in peace, respecting all religious beliefs, political ideologies and philosophies. In this age of communication and social networks, there is no room for discrimination of any kind. We are all citizens of this planet. This is our home. Reported violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the brotherly people of Nicaragua risk triggering yet another migratory flow in Central America. I call once again on Nicaragua's Government and civil-society actors to restore peace through political dialogue.

In 2015, Panama served as host for the historic rapprochement between Cuba and the United States. I take this opportunity to reiterate the call for a return to that path and for recognition of the steps taken by the Government of Cuba to open its economy for the benefit the Cuban people and the island's economic and social development.

I wish to stress that, although our continent is at peace, the political crisis in Venezuela, rising drug production in Colombia, the corruption affecting so many economies in the region and the tense situation in Nicaragua are challenges calling for the region's political leaders to redouble their efforts to seek compromises to restore peace to those societies.

In the fight against drug trafficking, Panama will refocus its strategy to go beyond drug interdiction and criminal arrests to rebuild communities and support people in cutting ties with illegal groups and living as loyal citizens of the State.

We reaffirm our commitment to be among the leading nations that work together with multilateral organizations for a better world. In that regard, in November we will inaugurate, in the presence of the Foreign Ministers of Central America and the Caribbean, the Regional Logistics Centre for Humanitarian Assistance. Panama is putting its connectivity at the service of the region to respond to natural disasters and emergencies across the continent.

While respecting different systems of government, I believe that politics in future will be not only about how to obtain power but also how to use it for the good of the people. Based on our firm belief in the need to build a fairer and more peaceful world, Panama is working to broaden its bilateral relations with countries of South-East Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and with Australia and China, as a means of getting closer to the world and of fulfilling our role as a builder of bridges.

Over the past 10 years, I have had opportunities to visit more than 40 countries and become acquainted at first hand with best practices, technology and cooperation programmes, which we have been able to use in my country. Such is the nature of diplomacy — using our abilities to help, and not destroy, one another. Accordingly, we are developing a monorail with Japanese technology, a subway with French trains, technical higher education based on the Singaporean model and electric power plants fuelled by natural

gas with North American technology. In pursuing our vocation to be a bridge linking the world, Panama will host World Youth Day in January 2019, to be attended by Pope Francis, which will bring together hundreds of thousands of young people from 192 countries and will be focused on the shared goal of achieving peace to build a better world and overcome cultural and religious barriers.

I bid farewell to the General Assembly with a peaceful conscience, knowing that I have used the political power bestowed upon me by the people solely for their benefit, while unwaveringly leading the struggle. Panama's success benefits not only Panama's people, but everyone. I wish to express today before the entire General Assembly and the world my commitment to continue working as a responsible citizen of the world, together with my people and all nations, to strengthen the United Nations system and all its bodies so that the citizens of our beautiful planet always remain the focus of our struggles and efforts.

In conclusion, I share with members the pride that I feel in having contributed to strengthening my country's vocation as a bridge of peace, dialogue and social justice.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Geingob: I wish to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

On 21 July, the people of Namibia and our friends around the world laid to rest our first Foreign Minister, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab. He represented our liberation movement, the South West Africa People's Organization, at the United Nations for more than 15 years. Under his presidency at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, we adopted the Millennium Development Goals, the precursor to the Sustainable Development Goals. The family of Mr. Gurirab, the Government and the people of the Republic of Namibia have been deeply touched by the outpouring of condolences and sympathies following his death. We are deeply appreciative of the memorial service held in his honour here at Headquarters.

Two months ago, I travelled to Nigeria to bury former Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, who stood by our side during our liberation. Two weeks ago, I travelled to Accra for the burial of Mr. Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the Organization — a son of Africa whose flame was extinguished but whose light will shine on throughout the ages. A few days ago, in this very Hall, we gathered to pay tribute to that revered personality and architect of peace. He was a man of great stature who dedicated his entire adult life to the pursuit of global peace and security. May the souls of those distinguished sons of Africa and of the United Nations rest in eternal peace.

Following the end of the Cold War and the old bipolar dispensation, the world has slowly drifted ever more worryingly towards unilateral action. That development goes against one of the fundamental tenets of democracy upon which the Organization was built. It is for that reason that we must embrace multilateralism with greater urgency to counter unilateral action. It is also for the same reason that we fully concur with the Secretary-General's sentiments, as expressed in his statement in paragraph 1 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/73/1), that,

> "As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism is more important than ever."

The Republic of Namibia was founded on the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice. The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in

our Constitution include virtually all of the rights and freedoms recognized in international human rights instruments. However, those instruments in and of themselves are not sufficient to bring about sustainable development. Namibia recognizes that there are existing and emerging threats and challenges that continue to frustrate individual and collective efforts to achieve greater socioeconomic progress. To that end, Namibia has embraced sustainable development and is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its principles, goals, targets and indicators. As a matter of fact, Namibia has integrated all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets into its national development plans. As a dry and arid country, often affected by seasonal droughts and floods, we have stepped up our efforts to implement the SDGs in critical areas such as energy, water and terrestrial ecosystems. In that regard, Namibia wishes to benefit from the assistance to be provided by the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, established in Istanbul on 4 June, to identify and locate drought and flood areas in a timely manner.

Although Namibia has witnessed sustained economic growth over many of the past 10 years, unemployment remains persistently high. Nevertheless, Namibia has seen one of the most rapid decreases in poverty levels in our region over the past 10 years, from 28.8 per cent to 17.4 per cent. I am also happy to inform the Assembly that life expectancy in Namibia has risen from 58 to 65 years of age.

However, inequality in Namibia remains a challenge, as reflected in the skewed ownership of land, whereby white Namibians own 70 per cent of all agricultural land. As part of its efforts to create conditions favourable to fighting poverty and maintain peace and stability, Namibia will hold its second national land conference during the first week of October. In preparation for the conference, the Government has conducted consultations in all of our 14 regions so as to ensure an inclusive process. We believe in consultations. If diplomacy fails, people go to war. That is why we are pursuing an inclusive consultative process, with the full knowledge that inclusivity spells harmony and exclusivity spells conflict. We have made a concerted effort to include as many stakeholders as possible and to ensure that everything will be done within the ambit of our laws. Accordingly, we call on our development partners to support the outcome of the conference so that they can continue assisting us in the process of socioeconomic transformation.

I have stated before that Namibia's classification as an upper-middle-income nation fails to consider the skewed distribution of income. That status prevents us from accessing official development assistance and affordable, concessional finance. The situation has the potential to jeopardize efforts in Namibia and other developing countries to fully achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Communicable diseases also threaten to jeopardize our reaching the 2030 Agenda Goals. For that reason, Namibia endorses the call to end endemic tuberculosis and reaffirms its commitment to join the world in working to achieve that goal. With a population of approximately 2.5 million people, Namibia ranks as the ninth most tuberculosis-affected country in the world, which is one of the top three causes leading to hospitalization. The Government of Namibia has demonstrated its commitment to addressing that disease by including related targets in its fifth national development plan, as well as by ensuring that 70 per cent of available funding for tuberculosis comes from domestic resources.

I should caution that inadequate human and financial resources, high levels of poverty and the lack of public-health services in rural areas remain a concern. As the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), our country reaffirms its commitment to the African Union Declaration on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other Related Infectious Diseases, working within the Harmonized Surveillance Framework for HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the SADC Region, and will join the international community in the fight against tuberculosis.

I congratulate the Secretary-General for launching the United Nations Global Youth Strategy. Africa has the fastest-growing youth population. In my capacity as Chairperson of SADC, I wish to inform the Assembly that the region has adopted a strategy to achieve industrialization by 2063. In that regard, the thirty-eighth SADC Summit, held in Windhoek in August, adopted the theme "Promoting infrastructure development and youth empowerment for sustainable development". We are convinced that the youth of the SADC region, and of the world in general, are the future custodians of our social, political, economic and governance infrastructure. As such, young people need

to be provided with the requisite skills and training and be economically empowered through entrepreneurship to drive development towards inclusive growth and shared prosperity. The youth of the SADC region, like their counterparts in the rest of the world, yearn for better prospects. They yearn for a future of opportunity and job certainty, wherein the fourth Industrial Revolution will represent opportunities, not threats. A future characterized by the rapid advancement of technology, advanced robotics, artificial intelligence and mechanization should present more opportunities, rather than problems, for our youth and for humankind in general. The onus is on us to mitigate the potential problems that might accompany those technologies and to understand how they can be used to enable our youth to become drivers of economic growth and industrial development.

Let me emphasize that excluding women from certain spheres of life is to waste skills and expertise that could otherwise contribute to sustainable development. In that context, we applaud the Secretary-General for exercising leadership and for reaching gender parity in the Secretariat among senior management and resident coordinators. Namibia is fully committed to implementing gender equality, which is evident in the important role that women play in our politics. The late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan was right when he said at the Conference on African Women and Economic Development in Addis Ababa in April 1998,

> "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance".

The world should do more to make gender equality a reality.

While we commend the Secretary-General on his successful reform initiatives, I remind the Assembly of the historic commitment that we all made at the 2005 World Summit

> "to strengthen the United Nations with a view to enhancing its authority and efficiency [and] address effectively ... the full range of challenges of our time" (*resolution 60/1, para. 146*).

It is time to ensure that we live up to that pledge. In that regard, it is pertinent to demonstrate the political will of the United Nations membership with regard to redressing Africa's exclusion from the Security Council. The world has moved on, and the old and unjust order cannot persist. Africa and its 1.2 billion inhabitants can no longer be excluded from assuming their place on that primary decision-making body.

For Africa and the rest of the developing world, peace is the main foundation for and guarantor of sustainable economic growth and development. As leaders, together with the citizenry of the great African continent, we need to understand that it is our collective responsibility to maintain peace so as to enable Africa to unlock its full potential. Every step that advances a peaceful Africa should be welcomed. In that vein, we commend His Excellency Mr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and his Eritrean counterpart, His Excellency President Isaias Afwerki, for signing an agreement to end the war between their two countries and for the subsequent resumption of diplomatic and trade ties. I am confident that that spirit of unity, peace and security, as embodied in the African Union's Agenda 2063, will spread throughout the Horn of Africa and all areas afflicted by conflict in Africa.

Namibia is a child of international solidarity, in whose birth the United Nations served as midwife. We relied on the solidarity of the nations of the world to support us in our quest to achieve our self-determination. In that connection, we call for the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions on the Western Sahara, which will lead to a positive, peaceful and permanent solution that meets the aspirations and will of the people of that area. In the same vein, we reaffirm our support for the people of the occupied territory of Palestine in their pursuit of self-determination, justice, freedom and independence.

During the darkest days of our fight for independence, the Government and the people of Cuba joined Angola in coming to our aid and shedding their blood for our liberation, which led to the decisive battle of Cuito Cuanavale and the resulting negotiations, elections and, eventually, freedom. It is in that spirit of profound kinship that we share with the Cuban people that we renew our call for lifting the decades-old, outdated, ineffective and counterproductive economic and financial embargo on Cuba. It is now time for all of us to demonstrate the leadership required to bring prosperity and peace to all of the world's people. It is time to lead in the spirit of peace, equality and sustainability. It is time to make the United Nations relevant to all of the world's people. Let us seize this unique moment in history.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Akufo-Addo: Ghana salutes the historic election of Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session as the first female Latin American President of the General Assembly, and congratulates her most heartily. Her election reinforces our common belief that gender equality must be a central feature of the global agenda.

Thirteen days ago, we laid to rest in his home soil of Ghana our brother Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations and the first from sub-Saharan Africa to occupy that exalted position. On behalf of the Government and the people of Ghana, I wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Secretariat, led by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and the whole world community for the outpouring of grief and condolences that we received on the passing of Kofi Annan. We were deeply touched that so many world leaders and people took the trouble to come to Accra to bid him farewell. Kofi Annan's passionate and profound belief in the United Nations and his certainty that a better organized and stronger United Nations would make the world a better place is an ideal that should not be allowed to die.

Today we continue to be faced with the stark reality that resolutions, norms and any number of votes in the Security Council and the General Assembly mean nothing without the political will of the international community to enforce them. We continue to try to work out what the role of the Organization should be. Should it be just a club of nation States that exists to look after their own interests? What of its formation by "we the peoples", as declared in its founding document? Does the theme that we have chosen for this session of the Assembly have any relevance in real life? And do we want to make the United Nations relevant to all people? Do we want an Organization that ensures shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies, or should it remain a place where resolutions are adopted but ignored with impunity?

When some of the nations of the world gathered in San Francisco 73 years ago and signed the landmark document that created the Organization, the world was very different from what we have today. I am not referring only to the difference in the number of States in the room on that occasion or the difference in the mode of travel that brought the leaders to that meeting, as opposed to the jet planes that brought us all to New York this week. I am not referring either to the tweets by which we communicate now as opposed to the elegant handwriting that they employed in 1945. I am referring to the theme that we have chosen for this session of the General Assembly, and I wonder if it would have been comprehensible to that group in San Francisco. It is a different world in which we currently live, and we should accept the fact that the Organization must change to suit contemporary needs.

Ten years ago, as the General Assembly was starting its proceedings, the world was plunged into a financial crisis. The first scenes of that crisis were played out on a street not far from where we are gathered, but the consequences were felt, and continue to be felt, around the world in small countries like Ghana. Some say that upheaval lies at the heart of the change in politics and outlook throughout the world. Today, as we speak, a trade war is being stoked between the two largest economies of the world. The consequences will affect those who have had no say, including small countries like Ghana. Those events provide proof, if any were needed, that ours is an interdependent world. We in Ghana, and people in other parts of the African continent, are determined to pull our countries out of poverty and into prosperity. We do not believe that a nation needs to remain poor or become poor for others to become prosperous. We believe that there is room

and that there are enough resources on the planet for us all to be prosperous. But it does mean that the rules and regulations that we fashion to guide our dealings with each other have to be respected by all of us.

From the environment to trading rules, we have to accept that there cannot be a different set of rules for different countries. The United Nations provides the best vehicle to date for all nations to address their aspirations and challenges. Ghana has always conveyed its belief in the United Nations and sought to contribute its share to efforts to make the Organization successful. We have embraced the Sustainable Development Goals, and we have integrated the 17 ambitious Goals into our national vision and budget. We intend for Ghana to take its turn in July 2019 and present its voluntary national review during the High-level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council. We will share our successes and challenges, as well as opportunities for new and continuing partnerships.

It is important to reiterate that advocating for a world order in which all countries sign up to obey the rules does not mean that we insist on uniformity. We take pride in what distinguishes us as Africans and as Ghanaians. Fifty-five per cent of the work of the Security Council last year had to do with Africa. Unfortunately, that invariably meant peacekeeping and poverty-related issues. We no longer want to be the place that requires the intervention of peacekeepers and poverty-fighting non-governmental organizations, no matter how noble their motives. Our regional bodies, like the Economic Community of West African States, and our continental body, the African Union, are making systematic efforts, despite significant handicaps, to bring peace and stability to the entire continent, and, sooner rather than later, they will succeed. We know that we must get our population educated and trained, and we are setting about that. We must address our infrastructural deficit.

The traditional methods for tackling that problem will not provide the answer. We are looking for new ways to resolve it. Ghana, like many countries in Africa, is forging relations with China, so as to make arrangements that can help address part of our infrastructure deficit. That is not a uniquely Ghanaian or African phenomenon. It has not been lost on us that the developed, rich and well-established countries have been paying regular visits to China and seeking to open new economic ties and improve upon existing ones. It is also not lost on us that much anxiety is being expressed about the possibility of a recolonization of the African continent by a new Power. We should learn from history. It was at the turn of the twentieth century that China's first railways were built by Western companies and were financed by Western loans to a nearly bankrupt Qing Dynasty, and it was under those circumstances that a certain strategic port called Hong Kong was leased for 99 years. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Today the former victim of Western railway imperialism is lending billions to countries throughout Africa, Asia and Europe to build not only railroads, but also highways, ports, power plants, other infrastructure and businesses. The historical echoes are certainly worrisome, but surely we must, and can, learn from history. We in Ghana must build roads, bridges, railways, ports, schools, hospitals, and we must create jobs to keep our young people engaged. It is obvious to us that the development trajectory on which we had been for many decades had not been working. We are trying a different one, and we would appreciate the support and goodwill of the world, especially in helping to curtail the huge flow of illicit funds from our continent.

It is in everybody's interests that we, who are counted among the poor of the world, make a rapid transformation from poverty to prosperity. We are determined in Ghana and, increasingly, in more and more parts of Africa, to chart our own paths to prosperity and pay our own way in the world. We are no longer interested in being a burden on others. We will shoulder our own responsibilities and build societies and nations that will be attractive to our youth. We have the necessary sense of enterprise, creativity, innovation and hard work needed to engineer that transition, hence our vision of a Ghana and an Africa beyond aid.

It is equally important that the United Nations be reformed so as to be able to preside over the changed and changing world to which we all aspire. The powerful nations must be willing to adapt to changes to make our world a better place. After all, we all inhabit the same planet, and we all owe the same duty of care to ensure its survival. The African common position on United Nations reform, as expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus, remains the most comprehensive proposal for the reform of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. It is time that the global community endorse it so as to create a modern United Nations fit for purpose in our time.

May God bless the United Nations and us all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kaljulaid: Ten days ago I was in Ukraine, picking up syringes and empty bottles in a park next to a kindergarten in the industrial city of Dnipro. It was on the occasion of the first World Cleanup Day, the biggest-ever civil-society action facilitated by digital technologies and the will of millions to volunteer. Fifteen million people in 140 countries, among whom were many Presidents and Prime Ministers, took part and decided to do something for our planet. They were responding to the outcry of Estonians who launched the voluntary clean-up action 10 years ago. It is very easy just to talk about a cleaner environment or climate change, but if you really want to get things done, then very often you simply must get up and do it yourself.

In many ways, that is also the reason why Estonia is running for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for the period 2020-2021, as small countries have no time for small objectives. Our aim, among others, is to bring all things digital to the Security Council. Cyberrisks are something that Estonians, as citizens of a fully digitized State, understand better than most. We want to offer our perspective so as to ensure that human beings remain safe in this new world where cyberrelated threats are combined with conventional ones. The vision that we have for our candidacy and for the United Nations as a whole is based on three keywords: empathy, equality and efficiency.

First, with regard to empathy, however sad they are, we must talk about our concerns honestly. Aggression should be called aggression, war is war and occupation remains occupation. Whether we are talking about Africa or Europe, I am always deeply touched by the misery that war and conflict cause, as I am when talking with internally displaced women and children in occupied eastern Ukraine or with Georgian politicians who are told that, because of the occupation, their country will forever be denied full participation in world democratic forums that we, who are luckier than they, preciously cherish. Estonia stands in solidarity with all those affected by conflict, terrorism and violent extremism. We reach out with humanitarian aid and practical assistance, as well as our peacekeepers, from Africa to the Middle East. We do what we can, yet it feels as though it is never enough.

Ongoing military aggression in eastern Ukraine continues in the very heart of Europe. The Crimean peninsula remains occupied, as do parts of Georgia, and there is no resolution to the long-term and violent conflicts in Africa. It is hard to tolerate those tragic situations. Yet mincing words to make ourselves feel better is no solution. For those in distress, recognition of their true situation, together with the humble recognition that we cannot do much more than commiserate, is offering at least some hope — some hope that one day things could be better; a hope that cannot feed on euphemisms avoiding straightforward admittance.

In July, we all reached an agreement on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and I am really looking forward to its adoption in Marrakech in December. But an agreement needs implementation. Without implementation, it is hollow — as hollow as the days ahead for those not knowing where they should lay their head for the night or how to calm their crying, hungry and frightened children. We need to get up and just go help.

The same applies to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In order to tackle the global challenge of climate change that is affecting billions, we must implement the commitments we have collectively undertaken, because the effects of climate change are increasingly being felt all over the world, not only in the developing countries — especially by small island States, where homes, food and even clean drinking

water are greatly at risk and countries are forced to jump through varied and expensive hoops in order to gain access to relief funding — but also in the developed world, where people have lost their loved ones or homes in European forest fires or in hurricanes in America and the Pacific.

Yet we are still not dealing with root causes, making the world safe for our children by applying the proper and best available technology standards to all energy production and use, both in the developed and in the developing world. We should also, very simply, never forget to switch the light off when leaving the room or get an air conditioner that stops automatically when we open the door — do what we can when we see that we cannot do it yet at the global level.

We are all equals in this Hall, not only because we have declared so in the Charter of the United Nations, but also because the challenges we now face are going to affect each and every one of us. Equality in the face of global challenges is just the law of nature, which is much stronger than our international law could ever be. Yet, international legal space matters, as common solutions demand respect of each and every one.

We see solutions in liberal thinking, but progress is not possible through polarization, fragmentation or tribalism. Progress is the force born out of debate and seeking common solutions. Sovereign equality — the idea that all sovereign States are equal — is a fundamental tenet of international law and relations. The role of the United Nations is to provide that equality, as a guarantor of the rules-based global system. We depend on each other, whether we like it or not.

And very often it is not the State or international organizations that get things done, but the grass-roots activists and non-governmental organizations that have a vision and a sense of responsibility. A principled voluntary approach can shift mountains of inefficiency, bad governance, neglect and lack of ideas. It can guide and catalyse policymaking, but not replace it.

Recent women movements like HeForShe have come a long way in countering gender-based and sexual violence. Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights. With that in mind, Estonia is working actively in the Commission on the Status of Women. I have gladly and humbly accepted Secretary-General Guterres' invitation to co-chair the High-Level Steering Group for Every Woman Every Child for the next two years. During my tenure, I intend to raise awareness of the heroic efforts people are making globally, often working without any institutional support. I wish to demonstrate how many good ideas there are around the world — ideas that have already been found and tried, but only on a small, scale, and that help someone, somewhere, waiting to be discovered and up-scaled in order to help as many in the world as possible. I hope to provide recognition, but also the dissemination of best practices, which are often the same thing. That is how I can personally get something done.

In terms of efficiency — and that is my third key word — nothing is more important than truly effective multilateralism. Due to its inclusiveness, the Organization holds great legitimacy and, due to its high standards, it is a moral force. International law should be the primary yardstick of national interest. Those not so powerful, small States, understand that well.

On Security Council reform, we need to win more space for common ground. Peoples and States, both big and small, should feel that the Security Council acts in their best interests. Too often, the Council falls victim to its internal differences and clumsy procedures. However, it should not be rendered powerless, especially when mass atrocities are being committed.

We, together with the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, have called for Security Council members to feel the responsibility and be held more accountable if they block action against breaches of international humanitarian law. It is telling that 117 States have already signed the ACT group's code of conduct. Furthermore, we unwaveringly support the proposal of President Emmanuel Macron of France, together with Mexico, the Netherlands and other States, that in the face of great human suffering, the permanent members should voluntarily refrain from the use of their veto.

Furthermore, with respect to efficiency, information and communications technology can revolutionize entrepreneurship, education, employment in general, and even health care. Digital online services provide economic growth, bring down unnecessary barriers between citizen and State, as well as between businesses and sectors, and transcend geographical limits. Estonia has shared its knowledge with many nations of the world and will continue to do so, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, the African Union and all those interested and willing.

New technologies should always be seen as enablers. They create equal opportunities if supported by proper policies. The risks related to them should not be ignored, also because they do not replace but rather enhance most of our conventional risks. But well-set international legal space should be able to deliver for humankind and avoid Armageddon scenarios.

No new technology can thrive in a fragmented world. Now more than ever, we need global free trade as an essential element of fostering long-term development and growth. Estonia, as a small, export-dependent country, is an advocate of free trade, including through creating better market access for developing countries and improving business conditions for investments. Trade and economy are closely linked with security, as history has so often demonstrated.

We stand to protect what the developed world has achieved, what the World Trade Organization stands for, and what aspiring regions and bodies have set out to achieve — for example, freedom of trade and work in Africa through legal space-setting by the African Union. We wish them speedy success, and we stand by them to help where we can with our own leapfrogging experience in digital technologies.

Empathy starts at home. If we want to care about others, we need to care about ourselves and about the people and environment around us. Being connected and dependent on each other more than ever, we simply cannot afford to be self-centred and ignorant. We all need to see the bigger picture. Empathy can easily be translated into efficiency if we really wish to get things done. Words are important, but they are not sufficient if they are not followed by concrete action.

Wars and conflicts continue, global warming is speeding up and the piles of litter around us just keep growing. We all have equal responsibility to be more proactive in preventing and meeting the challenges of our times. When we are feeling helpless, it is sometimes best to do the little thing we know we are able to do. Globally, if we all do our bit, things can only get better. Our globe cannot take any more free-riding; any more hand-wringing and saying "we cannot"; any more inaction; any more hiding behind our current comforts — so let us just get up and go get things done.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aoun (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on her election and wish her success in her tasks. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his efforts during the previous session and commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his efforts, especially his reform project at the helm of our international Organization.

The theme that the President has suggested for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is commendable because it demonstrates that the United Nations understands that its present reality requires a serious improvement in its future role. According to its purposes and founding principles, the United Nations must be the global conscience that preserves balance, prevents aggression, achieves justice and protects peace. However, we have seen that on many occasions the Security Council has been unable to adopt just and sometimes decisive resolutions pertaining to certain peoples, due to the right of veto. Some States refuse to implement resolutions that they deem to be inappropriate, and do so with impunity, even if those resolutions are binding and of immediate effect. I will cite some examples related to the suffering of our region.

Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which called on Israel to immediately withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territories, was implemented only after 22 years, and that was due to the resistance of

the Lebanese people. General Assembly resolution 181 (II), of 1947, concerning the partition of Palestine, was seen as being of a binding nature although it was not, and it was implemented instantly. Meanwhile, resolution 194 (III), of 1948, which provided for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland as soon as possible, remains unimplemented 70 years after its adoption. Evidently, the right of veto exists for many reasons; however, its use has had a negative impact on many States and peoples, especially in our region, and denied them their legitimate rights.

Consequently, if the United Nations is to be a global leaders that is relevant to all people, it must be reformed in a way that takes into consideration the expansion of the Security Council and an increase in the number of its members. It must also work in a more transparent, democratic and balanced way. Furthermore, it is important for the General Assembly to more closely reflect the actual orientation of the international community.

The United Nations is also called on to enhance human rights around the world. Lebanon, which contributed significantly to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is committed to the Declaration in the preamble of its Constitution. We underscore the freedom of the individual in society, and stress that any violation of human rights in any country could lead to conflicts in the future.

In that regard, we would like to state that Lebanon is steadily moving forward in promoting human rights at both the legislative and the executive levels. The Lebanese Parliament has adopted a law establishing a national committee on human rights, which includes the formation of a committee to investigate allegations of torture and mistreatment. In that context, we are completing a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which calls on Member States to put in place action plans to empower women to take part in decision-making, negotiation processes and in efforts to address conflicts. The Lebanese action plan guarantees the participation of women in the decision-making process at all levels, and activates their role in preventing conflicts, while enacting laws to prevent discrimination against women and protect them from violence and exploitation.

In Lebanon, we are trying to mitigate the effects of consecutive conflicts around us. At the security level, we have managed to improve our security and stability after having eradicated terrorist groups in the eastern and northern rural areas and dismantled their sleeper cells.

In terms of politics, Lebanon held parliamentary elections in accordance with a law of proportionality for the first time. That has led to a fairer representation of all components of Lebanese society. Today, we are in the process of forming a cabinet that is reflective of the election results.

In terms of the economy, we have established guidelines for an economic recovery plan that takes into consideration the outcomes of the Economic Conference for Development through Reforms with the Private Sector in order to activate the production sectors, update the infrastructure and bridge the gap between income and expenditure in our budget.

Nevertheless, we are still facing the consequences of events in Syria. Since the beginning of the war in that country, an influx of people have taken refuge in Lebanon in order to avoid the hell of war there. We are trying to provide a decent life for those displaced people. However, their numbers are increasing and they are affecting local Lebanese communities, as reflected, in terms of security, in an increase in the crime rate of more than 30 per cent; in terms of the economy, in a rise in unemployment to 21 per cent; and in terms of demography, in an increase in the population density from 400 to 600 people per square kilometre. That is compounded by our limited resources and a paucity of international assistance for Lebanon, which makes it impossible for us to continue to shoulder this burden, especially now that most Syrian territory is safe.

That is why I called for a safe return when I addressed the Assembly from this very rostrum last year (see A/72/PV.11). At that time, I distinguished between a safe return and a voluntary return. Except for a few, the Syrians who have taken refuge in Lebanon are not political refugees; the majority came to Lebanon owing to the security situation in their country or for economic reasons.

I have with me a map that was issued in 2014 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It shows an increase in the number of registered Syrian displaced persons from 25,000 in 2012 to more than 1 million in 2014 — just two years — and shows their distribution on Lebanese territory. The map illustrates what I am trying to explain to the Assembly. In that connection, I note that the United

Nations stopped counting displaced Syrians in 2014. The Lebanese General Security Directorate, however, has continued to keep track of those statistics, which show that the number of displaced Syrians in Lebanon increased to more than 1.5 million.

I should therefore like to reaffirm my country's position in favour of strengthening the right to a dignified, safe and sustainable return of displaced Syrians to their country without delay. Their return should not be connected to any political settlement, as no one knows when that will be reached. We refuse and reject any nationalization project for the displaced persons or refugees. In that context, we welcome any initiative that seeks to resolve the displacement issue, such as the Russian initiative.

History has taught us that injustice leads to war, and that the absence of justice and the application of double standards fuel resentment, which causes extremism, violence and terrorism. Unfortunately, the international political approaches to the Middle East region still lack justice and apply double standards. The Palestinian question is the best example of that, as the absence of justice in addressing it has led to many wars in the Middle East and inspired a resistance that will end only once injustice is eliminated and rights are realized.

The international community recently voted in the Security Council and the General Assembly against the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Despite the results of the voting, which reflected the will of the international community, some embassies have been moved to Jerusalem. A law on the nature of Israel as a Jewish nation State was also adopted. That unjust law rejects other people and expressly undermines all peace efforts and the two-State solution.

Furthermore, a decision was taken to withhold financial assistance to the United Nations Agency for the Relief and Work of the Refugees of Palestine in the Near East (UNRWA), which is mandated with assisting and protecting Palestinians pending a solution to their suffering. Has their suffering ended, thereby triggering an end to the role played by UNRWA? Is the objective to strip them of their status as refugees and to integrate them into their host countries in order to eliminate the Palestinian identity and force them to be naturalized?

The Palestinians are a people who found themselves without an identity or a country overnight, owing to a decision taken by those who were supposed to defend weak countries. Let us imagine for a moment that a similar international decision was taken that stripped us of our land and identity, and that while we were trying to hold on to them we were attacked from all sides in an effort to make us surrender. That is the situation today of the Palestinian people, who are dispersed throughout the world. Would we accept that situation for ourselves and our people? Would the international conscience accept that? Is that what is stipulated in international charters and conventions? What guarantees that small nations, such as the Lebanese people, will not face the same fate?

Furthermore, Israeli violations of resolution 1701 (2006), which now exceed 100 a month, continue by land, sea and air, despite the fact that Lebanon remains fully committed to its implementation.

Our world today is suffering a crisis of extremism and fanaticism that manifests itself in the rejection of others who are different and of their culture, religion, ethnicity and civilization — in essence, the rejection of their very existence. This crisis is likely to deteriorate. No country is safe from this crisis and its destructive effects on societies and States, because it will implode them from within.

The United Nations — and before it, the League of Nations — has been unable to prevent wars, maintain peace or achieve justice, especially in our region. One of the main reasons for that is because there is no international culture of peace based on mutual understanding and coexistence. There is therefore an urgent need for dialogue among religions, cultures and races. We need international cultural institutions that specialize in spreading the culture of dialogue and peace.

Lebanon is a pluralistic society in which Christians and Muslims live side by side and share governance and management. We also have a Lebanese diaspora spread throughout the world that shares common ground with many civilizations and cultures, making Lebanon an exemplary country in which to establish a human academy for encounter and dialogue to disseminate those values. Last year, from this rostrum, I launched an initiative to turn Lebanon into an international centre for dialogue among religions, cultures and races. We hope that this initiative will materialize and become a multilateral convention to establish such a centre in Lebanon that would be an international project for ongoing dialogue and harmonious coexistence, in line

with the purposes of the United Nations, including preventive diplomacy to avoid conflicts.

Humans are the enemy of whatever and whoever they do not know. Our salvation lies in dialogue and in coming together, rejecting violence and achieving justice. That is the only path that can lead our societies to stability, security and sustainable development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grabar-Kitarović: We live in times of great opportunities and serious challenges. We are more interconnected than ever, yet the world remains divided in many ways. Technological developments have enabled our world to become a truly global village. Our citizens have become global citizens and are well-informed and strongly driven by developments around the world. They expect global leadership in these times of rapid change and great complexity and look to all of us for inspiration.

What is it that people are looking for today? What is it that they expect of a leader? Mighty words? These do not really matter much anymore. Mighty deeds? Yes indeed, but, foremost, what they expect of us are the simplest of gestures that bring us together and that show our compassion and respect for each other. They expect integrity and inspiration.

This summer, football — of all things — triggered a global response, uniting us for a moment in our common aspirations to excellence. Following the success of the Croatian national team, I received so many congratulatory letters and messages from all corners of the world — from China, Australia and Saudi Arabia to France, Trinidad and Tobago and Nepal. I thank everyone for their kind words. Vishal Bagale of India kindly said, "Team Croatia really played well. They won our hearts". Shabbir Allam wrote in Croatian "*Svi kao jedno*" — "We are all like one". Gilberto Castillo of Colombia pointed out that the final was

(*spoke in Spanish*)

> "well-deserved for a country that has excelled in spite of the harsh historic situations it has experienced. It is certainly an example to follow".

(*spoke in English*)

Opshori Nondona, a 14-year-old girl from Dhaka, Bangladesh, was especially persistent in getting her message through. She wrote:

> "This year, the whole world has recognized a small beautiful country — Croatia — and the power of football. Now the world knows how powerful a small, beautiful nation can be."

These messages are but a fraction of many. What most of them had in common and what I could read in each of them is that Croatia — not a large country in terms of the size of its territory, its population or even its economic means — has become a metaphor, for all of these kind people who congratulated us, for what a country can do to inspire others and to reach the top of the world, winning the hearts of people worldwide and rousing enthusiasm that each of their countries can do the same.

"The value of a nation is not measured by its size", underlined Bernard Stem of France. Indeed, one does not need physical size in order to excel; it takes heart and persistence. Above all, you need to share a vision and to work together to make it happen. It is not the size of one's territory that matters; it is the size and quality of one's ideas. Magnitude is measured not only in volume, but even more so in determination to reach the goal. Individual Croatian players might have shown great skill and technique on the field, but the reason they triumphed was because they played together as a team.

The United Nations is a place where we must show our willingness to act together and play together as a team. Our adversaries are many: poverty; hunger; terrorism and extremism; instability; lack of education; gender inequality and the exclusion of women in many societies; environmental hazards; endangered security and trampled human dignity. We leaders should think of ourselves as a team that needs to work together to take advantage of our strengths and address our weaknesses in order to make our world a better place and inspire excellence globally. We should lead not only in managing crises and solving problems, but in spreading hope and optimism as well. We must demonstrate our humanity, solidarity and compassion and in doing so, we must above all respect one another. Respect is the most valuable asset that we have in interpersonal and international relations.

It is our responsibility as States Members of the United Nations to maintain the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of our Organization and to be up to the task for whatever challenges may confront us. However, raising awareness of the most pressing issues is not enough. We must also push for the adoption of the instruments and frameworks necessary to deal with them and, most importantly, secure their implementation. Without that, this rostrum will remain a self-serving global stage, just words without deeds.

Through the years, we have often learned the hard way that Governments and international organizations alike have their limits. This has also taught us the value and importance of inclusiveness and the important role that the private sector, academia, civil society and brilliant individuals can play in many different fields. Croatia has many Luka Modrićs, and not only in sports. Our people excel in so many areas. Marin Soljačić is a modern-day Nikola Tesla who is developing a wireless transfer of energy, Iva Tolić is conducting breakthrough work in molecular cell biology, Ivan Mrvoš is a developer of smart city furniture for the cities of the future and Mate Rimac is building electric cars, to name just a few among countless others.

So let us push against the formal limits of our organizations. Let us embrace the abundant talent around us. Let us inspire through science and innovation, through our brilliant individuals at home and our well-established, hard-working diaspora around the world. Let us inspire through our dedicated and tireless work at the United Nations. Deeds, not words; inclusion, not exclusion or isolation; empowerment and motivation are the keys to success.

We are the global village, but more often than not we tend to miss opportunities to bring the global agenda to our homes, communities and families. We also forget to include our homes, communities and families on the global agenda. It takes great tragedies caused by disasters, global crises, wars or climate change to remind us of what we all stand to lose. In today's world, that approach, embodied in multilateralism, is under ever-increasing strain. This is of particular concern, since the most important issues for humankind cannot be resolved by any State single-handedly or in isolation. Multilateralism is indispensable, but I would agree with those who call for changes to the multilateral system that we should not be complacent. We need to rethink decades-old mechanisms and instruments in order to adapt them to modern times and contemporary needs.

As we celebrate two very important anniversaries this year — the 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 25 years of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action — it is a fitting time to remember that respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law has always been a precondition for long-term stability, peace and development. Nor should we forget the seventieth anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We must learn from the tragedies of Srebrenica and Rwanda — "a shame for the United Nations", as described by the great Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to whom I pay special tribute today. Those dark hours must never be forgotten.

This year Croatia marked its fifth year of membership in the European Union (EU). Croatia is a telling example of the transformative force of EU membership and the benefits of accession to a space where peace, freedom, human dignity and prosperity are standards, not mere ideals. For those reasons, among others, Croatia strongly supports further EU enlargement to our south-eastern neighbourhood. Resolving all the outstanding legacies of war while constructively engaging in regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations is of course essential. Within that framework we will maintain a particular focus on issues related to the rights of minorities, missing persons, war crimes jurisdiction, victims of war and domestic processing of war crimes.

Good and mutually beneficial neighbourly relations depend to a large degree on the words coming from across the border, because it takes only a moment to deliver inflammatory and revisionist rhetoric in response to domestic political circumstances. However, repairing the damage caused takes much, much longer. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, our closest neighbour and a country that is extremely important to Croatia, we see a potential risk of legal uncertainty and political and institutional instability in the wake of the upcoming October elections, owing to a failure to amend the electoral framework so that it fully respects the rights and equality of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs, the three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the Constitutional Court's decision on the legitimate and proportionate representation of constituent peoples at all levels of Government, including the presidency. And although it is for the two sides involved to resolve the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, we should be extremely cautious when it comes to proposals with potential regional implications, notably on ideas regarding territorial exchanges. Otherwise we could reopen a Pandora's box of potential new territorial claims that would provoke serious instability and security threats.

There are inspiring developments, however, that have also demonstrated brave leadership in our own region of South-East Europe. We warmly welcome the signing of the agreement reached on the name dispute between Skopje and Athens, and we hope that the referendum this coming Sunday will represent a crucial impetus for the country's successful continuation of its path of integration into Europe.

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, we have sent a powerful message that there is hope for a brighter future. However, if we are to succeed in our endeavours, we have to mobilize all partners to work together. In that way we can achieve social progress, protect the environment, create economic growth and build a more just, stable and peaceful world. Runaway climate change is one of the most serious threats that we are regularly witnessing — from heatwaves and forest fires, no longer limited to California or the Mediterranean but now also in places such as Scandinavia, to historic typhoons in Japan or the Philippines and to the melting of the ice sheets on the planet's poles.

No country can shield itself from the negative effects of climate change, and Croatia is no exception. With more than 1,000 islands, islets and reefs, and a rich history of Mediterranean heritage, the implementation of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development right now is crucial to Croatia's future. All over the world, including Croatia, we are seeing rises in sea temperatures and unprecedented and irreversible changes in ecosystems. In Croatia's beautiful Adriatic Sea, one of the cleanest in the world, we have already registered more than 20 new species of tropical fish, some of them extremely invasive, that could irreparably shift its environmental balance. We may soon be exposed to the danger of rising sea levels, which is already an existential issue for many small islands around the world. It is estimated that the sea level in the Adriatic will rise by almost half a metre by the year 2100, submerging parts of world heritage places and treasures such as Split, Trogir and Dubrovnik. That is why climate action is not an abstract issue. It is a serious matter requiring our constant and undivided attention.

One of the most important climate-action and sustainable-development issues for Croatia is reversing the demographic trends on our islands, which are turning into places where schools have no children and churches see more funerals than baptisms and weddings. And yet the problems that many of these islands are facing are common all over the world. We need to improve affordable transportation and connections between the islands and the mainland. We need to resolve our water-supply issues and provide clean water and sanitation. We need to invest in education, technology, science and innovation so that societies and families can once again flourish on the islands.

Blue growth could be a solution. It is a long-term strategy to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors as a whole. The seas are drivers of the economy, with great potential for innovation and growth, and they are set to grow at twice the rate of the mainstream economy by 2030. That growth is especially welcome in a number of areas such as sustainable coastal tourism, new health benefits, better connectivity for islands, sustainable blue growth and jobs, marine technology, renewable energy, the management of maritime ecological threats and the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as improving safety and security with regard to maritime traffic and cross-border maritime pollution.

One of the issues that I would particularly like to emphasize today is marine litter, an increasingly worrying problem that threatens marine life in all of the world's oceans and affects more than 600 marine species. Croatia's coastal areas are being severely affected by poorly managed waste from our southern Adriatic neighbours. We have to address the rising problem of plastic pollution in our seas and oceans urgently if we want to leave a liveable world for future generations. Plastic debris — and each year around 8 million tons of it ends up in our oceans and seas — is particularly worrying because it is resistant to environmental breakdown. Plastic pollution not only harms sea life, it also carries toxic pollutants into the food chain, with us humans at the top. We can start solving this problem by educating and engaging everyone in a conversation to rethink plastic, by challenging society's perception that this indestructible substance can be treated as disposable.

In that regard, particular attention should be given to the Ocean Cleanup project, which is designing and developing the first feasible method to rid the world's oceans of plastic. Its first mission, to remove 50 per cent of the so-called great Pacific garbage patch in just five years, started several weeks ago. In the media they are calling it Pac-Man, in a reference to the popular early video game. Boyan Slat, the young man behind the invention, is a brilliant scientist of Croatian origin, living in the Netherlands, and he fully deserves to be given credit here today, beneath the United Nations logo, which clearly shows our oceans. My country is already actively preparing for the fulfilment of its obligations under the Paris Agreement.

This year was one of United Nations reforms in more ways than one — not only through results achieved in the pivotal sectors of peace and security, development and United Nations management, but also in the transformational nature of our mutual efforts to make our Organization fit for the twenty-first century. The world has changed profoundly since 1945 and the birth of the United Nations. In our reforms, it is essential that we strike the right balance between the maintenance of the basic framework based on the Charter of the United Nations and the flexibility that our new realities and contemporary needs demand. In pursuing United Nations reforms, we must not lose sight of the 2030 Agenda. We need a United Nations that is capable of coping with constant changes and growing challenges in the international arena, whether in the field of regional security, conflict management, threats to the environment, human rights or front-line technologies that are fundamentally transforming the areas of labour and disarmament alike.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General and his team for their tireless efforts to achieve reform. There is still a lot of work ahead of us, but we should be pleased with this year's results and trends. If we want to move forward and leave no one behind; if we truly strive to make the United Nations more relevant and, in doing so, more effective, we must also realize that the Organization is and should be much more than just New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi or any other conference location. Multilateralism starts in our own homes and our own minds. It cannot be an annual event. It needs to be our daily routine, a way of doing business in the world. Everything that we want to achieve globally and everything that we have agreed to so far under this dome will be easier to accomplish with the understanding and support of our citizens.

In order to confront all the adversities and adversaries mentioned in my speech, both as I have delivered it and in the more complete, written version that has been circulated, we must show our determination to take on the risk of decision-making. We must be open to new ideas and we must show emotion, empathy and above all enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is contagious. As Nelson Mandela — Madiba — whose centenary we celebrated two days ago, may have said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mansour (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Yemen, I would like to congratulate Ms. Espinosa Garcés and the friendly Republic of Ecuador on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session, and to wish her every success. I would also like to thank her predecessor for his notable efforts at the helm of the previous session. I thank the Secretary-General for his sincere and outstanding work, especially his attempts to advance peace in my country, Yemen, as well as his Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, whose ongoing efforts we support.

This is the fourth time I have addressed the Assembly from this rostrum since 2015. We are still in the grip of a war imposed on our long-established Yemeni people by armed militias who are receiving financial, media, military and logistical support from Iran and Hizbullah. They are extremists. They employ gangster tactics such as blowing up houses and places of worship and planting mines with unprecedented recklessness. They forcibly recruit children and extort funds and remittances. They have taken away our freedoms and rights while wreaking havoc in our institutions. However, as I address the Assembly, the Government of Yemen and all our local authorities and Government agencies are working hard from our provisional capital, Aden, and in our various liberated governorates to restore security and stability, as well as to provide services and create a democratic, federated civilian State where human rights are safeguarded, the dignity of women and youth is protected and the rights of children and various marginalized sectors of society are respected, a State where justice and equality prevail, in accordance with the outcome of our National Dialogue Conference and as a result of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, its implementation mechanism and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In past statements from this rostrum I have emphasized that Yemen's predicament is not a political conflict that can be contained in a dialogue. I have said that it is not even a coup, as those are conventionally defined and as happen in other States. It is a series of attempts to undermine the foundations of coexistence among Yemenis, to undermine their moderate beliefs and national principles as established by the two glorious revolutions of 26 September and 14 October. We are fighting a complex religious group that believes as a matter of policy in its divine and exclusive right to rule. It scorns all the contemporary values of democracy and human rights. Socially, it considers itself a unique race and demands that people glorify it. It is a group that has made use of every form of violence to tear down society and sow hatred among the people. Nationally, it is a group that has abandoned any loyalty to its nation and has become a war proxy that is beholden to Iran and Hizbullah. Any attempt to make peace with it is therefore doomed to fail, despite the major concessions we have made to establish peace in Yemen.

With that in mind, I call on the international community to shoulder its responsibilities by putting pressure on Iran to stop intervening in Yemen and supporting the Houthi militias, and to abide by international resolutions and participate in peace efforts. On multiple occasions from this rostrum I have told the Assembly that Iran conducts blatant interventions in Yemen. It finances the Houthi militias and provides them with weapons, missiles, equipment and experts. It targets international and regional waters and jeopardizes international shipping routes, and its policies enable the flow of drugs to other countries as well as drug-trafficking generally. It supports terrorism through the Houthis, Al-Qaida and Da'esh.

The Yemeni Government has always reached out for peace through round after round of consultations in Vienna, Geneva and Kuwait, and even after our Government delegation's return from Geneva at the beginning of this month. Our high-level delegation was keen to seize any opportunity that would alleviate the suffering of our people and achieve peace. However, the intransigence and brazenness of the insurgent Houthi militias have disappointed the hopes of the Yemeni people that any possible progress can be made, even at the humanitarian level. That is typical of this terrorist group.

I would like to underscore once again from this rostrum that we are ready for peace. We do not advocate war and vengeance but rather peace and harmony. We are fully aware of our responsibilities to the patient Yemeni people. What we are seeking is sustainable peace based on national, regional and international terms of reference. We want to restore our State and put an end to the coup in every aspect. We uphold the principles that our State must have sovereignty over

all of our national territory and that the State alone must possess medium and heavy weapons. That is the only way to attain stability in Yemen. Anything else will merely mean delaying and then preparing for new rounds of war and conflict.

We know that we cannot obtain peace by pleading with these gangsters, as some Member States do. Rather, peace can be achieved by diligently implementing the relevant international resolutions, and Member States should be serious about implementing them, especially Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), which calls on the Houthis to withdraw from cities and institutions and to hand over their weapons unconditionally. I therefore want to call on the Council not to waver in ensuring that its resolutions are implemented, as it did to ensure the political transition and national dialogue in Yemen, which endured for more than a year.

I want to underline the Yemeni Government's commitment to its efforts to protect civilians, especially women and children. We do not target civilians or their schools, hospitals or residential areas where there are rebel strongholds. We have an independent national commission of inquiry into human rights violations that investigates all allegations of violations of any sort. Every military unit of the Yemeni army has also been instructed not only to refrain from recruiting children but also to protect them, rehabilitate those who have been detained when fighting with the rebels and ensure that they return to school.

It is well known that the war has left our country facing economic hardship. The militias have drained our country's resources and our internal and external reserves, which has had an enormous impact on our citizens. In an effort to deal with these issues and stop the situation from continuing to deteriorate, we have introduced a series of measures, most recently last month, when we created an economic commission that the Government has authorized to take all necessary measures to halt the devaluation of our currency and develop a comprehensive economic vision that can help us adapt to this unprecedented situation. The Government, the commission and the Central Bank of Yemen have taken numerous remedial measures and issued a number of immediate instructions aimed at optimizing the conditions for dealing with our economic difficulties. They include permitting the export of oil and gas, stopping foreign currency flight, curbing imports of luxury goods and raising interest rates. In that regard, while Saudi deposits, though not the first attempts to stop the devaluation of our local currency, have helped to mitigate the economic crisis, Yemen is still more than ever in dire need of everyone's support.

Despite Yemen's limited resources and current circumstances, we continue to participate genuinely and effectively in the fight against terrorism, which is an unprecedented threat to international peace and security, as well as development. Within the framework of our national policy on fighting the scourge of terrorism, the Government will not cut back its efforts to take measures to counter terrorism financing and money laundering, and we are making earnest efforts to continue implementing our laws in that regard. My Government has imposed more stringent controls on various suspicious financial transactions and has strengthened coordination, cooperation and the exchange of information with all the relevant international and regional stakeholders. The Yemeni Government will also spare no effort to combat drugs and the illicit trade in them, whose proceeds are used to support and finance the terrorist acts committed by the Houthi militias, Al-Qaida and Da'esh. I call on all States to cooperate and coordinate with us in combating the smuggling of artefacts for financing militias and terrorist groups.

It is a happy coincidence that today marks the great Yemeni people's celebration of the fifty-sixth anniversary of our immortal 26 September revolution, which declared Yemen a democratic republic more than half a century ago. We are proud to be able to retell the glories of Yemen and the struggle of its liberal heroes. We want to stress to our people that the long history of the sacrifices that Yemenis initiated against underdevelopment, the rule of the clergy, injustice and tyranny is complemented today by the sacrifices of the heroes who are defending our revolution, our Republic and our country's unity. In the twenty-first century we can never accept the return of the rule of the mullahs in a new guise, that of the Houthi militias who want Yemen to revert to the dark ages of despotism.

Yemen is the origin and source of Arabism. It will continue to stand tall, proud and unified under a just, federated regime that corresponds to the ambitions and expectations of our great people. I am saddened to see bloodshed anywhere in Yemen, but I feel responsible before God and the people for stopping that bloodshed, inflicted by the war that has been imposed on our people. We will continue to strive positively and patiently alongside the rest of the world and to make

every sacrifice in our quest to restore peace, security and stability. It is our duty to alleviate the suffering of our people throughout our beloved nation, which today is struggling to implement the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, which are supported unanimously by Yemenis of all Yemeni parties, political and civilian organizations, including the Houthis themselves, and have been drafted as part of the Constitution for our new federated Yemen.

In that regard, on behalf of the Yemeni people I would like to thank the King, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It has played a leading role in alleviating the humanitarian suffering in Yemen through its continued support and its humanitarian relief and reconstruction efforts, especially the Saudi reconstruction and development programme in Yemen, an outstanding project aimed at bringing development to our troubled areas. Those efforts are starting to have positive effects for both the economy and for Yemeni citizens throughout the liberated territories. I would also like to sincerely thank the humanitarian organizations of the Arab coalition countries, as well as our sisterly and friendly donor countries, in addition to the various United Nations bodies, for their exceptional humanitarian efforts. I also want to take this opportunity to renew my call to all donors to honour the pledges they have made to the humanitarian response plan in Yemen with a view to further alleviating my people's suffering.

The suffering of the Palestinian people is growing daily, owing to Israel's occupation policies in the Palestinian territories. That is the main cause of tension in the Middle East. The Palestinian people have long awaited a just solution that will guarantee the creation of their independent State and an end to their suffering. In that regard, we call on the international community to continue supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in order to enable it to continue assisting Palestinian refugees.

My hope is to see the work of the General Assembly at this session succeed. I hope that by the next session, peace will have prevailed in Yemen and in the whole world.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to salute from this rostrum all our great Yemeni people, who are struggling everywhere to create a new, federated Yemen, a Yemen of justice, equality and good governance. I congratulate all of them, everywhere, on the occasion of the fifty-sixth anniversary of the glorious revolution of 26 September and the fifty-fifth anniversary of the immortal revolution of 14 October. I also want to say to all honourable, liberal, striving Yemenis that upholding the objectives of the September and October revolutions requires the implementation of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the creation of a new federated Yemen with all of its six regions. May the liberal martyrs of Yemen rest in peace. I also wish a speedy recovery to the Yemeni wounded and freedom to the abductees.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Yemen for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vázquez (*spoke in Spanish*): I bring greetings from the people of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, a country in the Southern cone of the Americas that is small but nonetheless has strong democratic institutions, social and economic stability and clearly defined values and principles, and that is making tangible progress in all areas. Of course, it is not and never will be perfect — do such countries exist? — but it works humbly day after day to make progress while leaving none of its inhabitants behind. That is the meaning of development, a multidimensional and dynamic process aimed at achieving the well-being

and prosperity of all citizens. In the World Economic Forum's *Inclusive Development Index 2018*, published in January, Uruguay is ranked as one of the 10 most inclusive emerging countries in the world and second in Latin America, owing to efficient public policies that enable us to use economic growth to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion and equity among generations.

Despite that, we admit that we still have a lot to do. In that regard, there is a specific issue affecting several countries, including our own, that I would like to briefly discuss. In our view, the criteria and methodology that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development applies to assess countries' development according to their per capita income represents a grave injustice. As a result, Uruguay, like other countries in the region, has been considered a high-income country since 2013, and starting this year, no longer qualifies for official development assistance. The recognition of our progress is encouraging, but we do not agree with the new classification for a fundamental reason, which is that while growth and development are linked, they are clearly not the same thing. Uruguay has enjoyed significant economic growth over the past 15 years that has enabled thousands of its citizens to emerge from poverty. But structural gaps persist.

Development in transition is not an arbitrary concept. It is the most accurate description of the situation of countries that, like Uruguay, are on a path to development but still need the support of reconsidered and reoriented cooperation. There is no question that we have made progress, but the road ahead will still be difficult. Paradoxically, it seems that no good deed goes unpunished, and we hope that this criterion will be reviewed soon. In addition, we are also of the view that in the life of countries not everything is about economic development and the distribution of resources. We in Uruguay know that and have advocated nationally and internationally for an agenda oriented towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, approved by the Assembly in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such an agenda should put special emphasis on the transformation of the energy matrix towards renewable sources and adaptation to verifiable climate change; on making progress in the irrefutible responsibility to protect our environment; and, as members are aware, on the fight for the health of our people, which is the struggle for life, the main human right that all the beings on this planet have.

As a result, we have implemented strict policies for the control of tobacco consumption and the prevention of non-communicable diseases, one of humankind's worst afflictions, in addition to active participation at the international level. That includes co-chairing the World Health Organization Independent High-level Commission on Noncommunicable Diseases and hosting the Global Conference on Non-Communicable Diseases in October 2017, where the Montevideo Road Map 2018-2030 was approved, wherein we reaffirmed the commitment to undertake bold actions to reduce by one third the number of premature deaths from such diseases. There is much left for us to do. There is also much to be done to combat the mortal agent that is tobacco, which kills more than 7 million of the planet's inhabitants per year, much more than the number killed by the two world wars of the twentieth century. That is why we invite every country to apply the measures established in Montevideo by the World Health Organization.

Those and other elements — such as the universal digital agenda, for which we we have developed our Ceibal and Ibirapitá plans, which we do not have the time to go into further detail about here — give an account of a small, modest and self-confident country moving in a concrete direction. That direction could be described simply as improving the quality of life of all the country's inhabitants without discrimination of any kind.

Uruguay also belongs to the region and the world. In that vein, we reaffirm our historic commitment to a more participatory, fairer, balanced and multipolar international system that translates into the basic principles of our foreign policy that has existed for decades. That includes, for example, first, the commitment to the maintenance of peace, international disarmament and security, as well as the participation of our armed forces in peacekeeping operations; second, our country's firm rejection of terrorism, organized crime and all types of violence and discrimination, which unfortunately are rampant in the world; third, support for the peaceful settlement of disputes and for the sovereign equality of States regardless of their geographical size and number of inhabitants; fourth, unimpeded dedication to, and respect for, international law, which is the greatest guarantee for the sovereignty of peoples and their peaceful coexistence; fifth, our

unwavering commitment to the promotion and the protection of all human rights; sixth, adherence to relevant notions such as non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, respect for sovereignty and the self-determination of peoples; and, seventh, the promotion of multilateralism in all its facets, political, economic, cultural, et cetera, as the best way to face the global challenges facing humankind.

In a turbulent international context where the world resembles an asylum run by its own patients, we assert more than ever the values and principles I just mentioned. In that context, we call for a joint, committed effort to strengthen and modernize the international system and the United Nations. Those are not just words. In practice we worked intensely as non-permanent members of the Security Council during the 2016-2017 biennium, and now we are doing the same in the Economic and Social Council. We put forward our country's candidature as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021. Uruguay is committed to pacifist ideals, solidarity and global peace and security.

From this place, where we can speak about any number of issues of interest to humankind, I wish to conclude my intervention by mentioning one that, humbly, we consider it a priority to address before everyone here. I am speaking of environmental degradation and the consequences of climate change. The crisis that we are experiencing at the global level must be handled decisively by the leaders of each of the nations represented here. This is everyone's fight. It is the struggle for life. We ask the powerful world leaders to respect international agreements to protect the environment and to try to avoid ills that are suffered essentially by the world's poorest people. We have to take active measures to protect all people in our world, especially the poorest, who suffer the most. The world is also suffering, just as a living being suffers, from various risk factors that destroy it little by little, day after day. This world is our only home for now and for future generations. This world suffers from wars, from the unbridled desire for indiscriminate profit by industries that kill humankind, as the tobacco industry does, which have no regard for the environment, pollution or the consequences of the savage consumerism that we are experiencing.

Just as our behaviour directly affects our health, and it is the duty of the States to fight for the lives of their inhabitants, it is the duty of all of us who inhabit this planet to fight for the place in which we live and that we will have to leave for those who will follow us in this life. That is the case of the December 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, concluded within the framework of the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As it is the best possible hope for global survival and security, as well as a commitment that is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda, we reaffim our commitment to that Agreement. We once again urge the powerful leaders of the countries of the world to respect and comply with those Agreements. Agreements are signed in order to be carried out — and this one especially must be complied with. We also join the call to all those States that have not yet ratified it to do so as soon as possible. On that issue, as in so many other areas of life, we need not rush; however, we must not be late either. Humankind does not have much time to consider those agreements, which are necessary to protect the environment.

In conclusion, we are convinced that the United Nations system is humankind's best possible opportunity to approach confidently and optimistically the problems that the present and the future pose, and to act accordingly. We are all necessary to this shared task. Member States can count on us, and we know that we can count on all Member States.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duque Márquez (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the immense honour of addressing this historical and important General Assembly for the first time as the President of Colombia. I arrive both proud at having been elected with the highest number of votes in our electoral history and at being a member of a new generation of Colombians who are motivated to unite our country around common objectives.

Colombia is a magical country, where many races, regions, customs and ecosystems coexist. It is a nation where culture, ancestral heritage, nature and the industrious and helpful spirit of our citizens define the resilient vastness of a society that does not bend to any adversity. Our patriotic, industrious and tireless work force has made Colombia a people that has earned the respect of the world and attracted interest in investment, and one that is charting a path towards progress, with democratic institutions.

We have been able to maintain economic growth amid complex regional volatilities. We have seen cities transform, a boost in production sectors and an expansion of the middle class while we adapted to the challenges of globalization. We have made progress in gender equality and in the worlds of work and education. In recognition of that progress, I named the first Cabinet with gender parity in the history of my country. But there is much to be done on that front, and we will continue to move forward. In proudly telling of that history, I commit myself as a Colombian and I am even more so as we move towards 2019, when we will celebrate the bicentennial of our independence.

We must be more motivated today than ever to achieve social justice, reject hatred, polarization and revenge and concentrate on achieving a pact for Colombia — a pact for equity. That is the invitation we are sending: that we build a development plan and agenda to define State policies in the coming decades, using the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 as a reference, within a framework of legality and entrepreneurship that bring us to the desired and necessary equity. I want that proposed agreement to be based in legality. Peace is an objective of all Colombians and all of us, absolutely everyone, will work decisively for it. However, peace needs to be built with the rule of law, which combines the public goods of security and justice.

Our Government is going to work so that the process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration put forward in the past few years will go forward successfully. We will offer those who have genuinely opted to rejoin the law and to be subject to the principles of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition the right opportunities for progress and protection. I appreciate the support of the United Nations for its commitment to contributing to the success of that process. For that reason, we have asked it to continue with those tasks. We will work in the same way to ensure that the resources and investments that give rise to hope reach all regions of the country, primarily those that have been hit by violence. The United Nations Mission in Colombia as well as our supervisory bodies know that our Government has gone through a fragile process on several fronts. The first is budgetary fragility: many commitments were made without allocating sufficient resources. The second is institutional fragility: a dispersed and complex architecture was created that has so far been unable to effectively make progress in the achievement of all the goals.

However, I want to reiterate to the Assembly that Colombia's goal is to comply with our obligations to those who have genuinely left the path of violence behind. We hope to be able to count on the financial support of the entire international community to give the process the necessary strength. But just as we would comply with our obligations to those who abide by the rules, it is also our duty to apply the law in an exemplary manner when it comes to those who persist on the path of criminality. We will not accept a repeat of the violence. Those who continue in the world of crime and who seek to mock the victims and the generosity of the Colombian people will feel the full force of justice.

If we want peace to reign in Colombia, we must defeat drug trafficking. With regard to illicit crops, we became aware of an alarming situation a few weeks ago. The growing trend of the past five years cannot continue, since such seeds have fuelled and become the reason for the emergence of dangerous organized armed groups. That is why we are committed to dismantling those transnational criminal networks through a comprehensive approach.

Drug trafficking is a global threat. It is true that we must do more in terms of prevention and care for addicts from a public health perspective. That is an indisputable truth. However, it is no less true that drug trafficking in Colombia is a predator of the environment, a destroyer of institutions and, above all, a corrupter of society. It is our moral duty to combat

that phenomenon, while at the same time promoting a society that rejects drugs because of their devastating effects on health and society.

We are already taking steps. We welcome the fact that two days ago we supported the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem, acknowledging that it is the task of all and requires that all countries, including those where consumption is increasing as well as those that produce chemical precursors, contribute. Under the leadership of the United States, 130 nations committed themselves to continuing that fight. We will not give up or accept as fate the addiction that is destroying the souls of so many young people.

Legality also means overcoming corruption. Corruption is a threat to democracy, social values and institutions and must be tackled with full resolve. From the first day of our Government, we presented measures to Congress, and then, in response to the popular clamour, we launched an ambitious and essential agenda together with all the parties. We showed the world that we are capable of uniting around national goals. I call on the international community to strengthen all sanctions tools and mechanisms to combat transnational corruption. Defeating corruption is a task that involves us all. We must do our utmost to expose those who are corrupt and to expedite their legal and social punishment.

Our commitment to development, our pact for Colombia, also seeks to promote entrepreneurship and economic recovery. The Sustainable Development Goals support our agenda for a Colombia where science and technology are driven by connectivity, access to capital, the development of the innovative economy and the promotion of research — a Colombia committed to protecting biodiversity, promoting renewable energy, reducing the individual carbon footprint and establishing a citizenship strengthened by steadfast ethics.

The world should know that that is the Colombia that we want to build every day. We will work to achieve that Colombia. That is our challenge and our motivation. For that reason, I must tell the world that those goals face a huge challenge.

That threat or challenge that our country is experiencing today is the thousands of fearful faces of those who are cold to the bone, with hunger in their stomachs and grief for their homeland. It is the challenge of people who, at this very moment, are walking in the open and into the unknown on Colombia's roads. They are our Venezuelan brothers who are fleeing a dictatorship. Many of them are innocent children, unprotected and exposed to the tragedy of exile. While, over a period of six years, the conflict in Syria has led to an influx of 600,000 migrants a year to Turkey alone, in less than two years Colombia has opened its doors to almost 1 million of our Venezuelan brothers. We have received them with affection, and we will always do so despite any social or financial obstacles, because brotherhood unites us.

However, we must call a spade a spade. We are experiencing the most egregious migration crisis in the region's recent history on account of a dictatorship that denied freedoms. Today I would like to make it clear that the self-determination of peoples cannot be manipulated at the free will of the oppressors. The world must act and unite so that that tragic flight comes to an end and a people can see hope flourish.

That is a global challenge. The end of the dictatorship and the return to democracy and full freedom are the only viable way. That is why the international community must immediately demand the release of political prisoners, quickly identify the best solutions to the crisis and prevent such desolation and despair from continuing to increase.

I ask that the United Nations hear our request. We are pleased that it listened to Colombia's request and that the Secretary-General appointed Eduardo Stein as Joint Special Representative for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, thereby elevatingthis debate. I also thank all the countries that joined us yesterday at the high-level meeting convened by Colombia, where the regional commitment to addressing that humanitarian crisis was clear. Such measures must be accompanied by the establishment of a multilateral fund to care for the migrant population, which is a victim of that dictatorship. That is why we must promote the proposal announced by the Inter-American Development Bank and its President, Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno. However, it is equally important that all international mechanisms be implemented in order to ensure that those who caused that terrible tragedy are reported to, and investigated and punished by, the International Criminal Court.

It is an honour for me to address the Assembly, to set out the vision that we have for Colombia, to call for global solidarity before the Venezuelan people and to issue them an invitation. Today more than ever, the world needs cooperation and multilateralism. It

is time to come together and not to isolate ourselves. It is time to make trade and cooperation the path of shared opportunities.

We must continue to move forward in a world where partnerships make it possible to mitigate the effects of climate change, strengthen fair trade, tackle corruption and transnational crime, create employment opportunities, put an end to discrimination and promote the idea of producing while conserving and conserving while producing.

The Colombia based on legality, entrepreneurship and equality that we wish to build is already under way. Moreover, we will not allow anything to snatch from us the hope of being a country that thinks big and that dreams of a better tomorrow and of working for the community of nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Tonga.

His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Tupou: I congratulate Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her assumption of her presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I assure her that the Tonga delegation will fully support her able leadership. I express our gratitude to her predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his successful and able leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-second session, in particular for making the work of the Assembly people-centred and striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet. I also commend His Excellency Mr. António Guterres for his ongoing stewardship of the Secretariat. Tonga fully supports the ongoing work he is undertaking on reform, including the all-important review of the United Nations multi-country offices in the Pacific Islands region.

My delegation and I also wish to congratulate the President also on the chosen theme, which is both timely and relevant. "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" aptly reflects who we are as a collective in ensuring the work of the United Nations has meaning to those that matter most — our peoples. We welcome this theme as the guiding principle for our work during this session.

In contributing towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, including the internationally agreed blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS), the Samoa Pathway, Tonga has made both agreements an integral part of its national planning processes. The Government's priority agenda from 2018 to 2021 aligns with 13 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, namely, Goals, 1 through 4, 6 through 9 and 13 through 17.

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development remains an important means, which Tonga endorses for the follow-up, monitoring and accountability of commitment by Member States through voluntary national reviews, which are linked to the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Tonga looks forward to presenting its first voluntary national report to the High-level Political Forum in 2019.

The High-level Political Forum will also dedicate a day at its high-level ministerial segment to the mid-term review of the Samoa Pathway in 2019. Tonga was pleased to host the Pacific regional preparatory meeting for the mid-term review of the Samoa Pathway in June, the outcome report of which forms the latest iteration of the Pacific region's sustainable development aspirations. Tonga looks forward to engaging with other SIDS and partners in Samoa at the end of next month to produce the final interregional report for the midterm review of the Samoa Pathway for consideration at the High-level Political Forum next year.

In that regard, we recognize the important contribution of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Subregional Office for the Pacific.

Tonga welcomes the convening of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) tomorrow. Combating the threat that NCDs poses to individuals, families and communities has been recognized as grossly underfunded given its magnitude.

We in Tonga are pleased to inform the Assembly of commendable reductions in the prevalence of tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption. Tongan people are eating healthier food and involved more in physical activities. We are, however, not without challenges, for example, as shown in rising obesity rates. The Tongan Government is addressing the issue by making unhealthy food choices more expensive and healthier food choices cheaper for the Tongan public.

Climate change continues to pose significant security threats to us as island States. In Nauru earlier this month, Pacific leaders endorsed an expanded concept of security in their communiqué and the Boe Declaration, linking, inter alia, climate change and threats to international peace and security. In that regard, Tonga welcomes the establishment of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security to further highlight the nexus between the threats of climate change with threats to international peace and security.

We note with concern the devastating impacts of climate change on our marine environment. Baselines that determine our territorial boundaries, once established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, should not be affected and should remain unchanged, despite the effects of sea-level rise. Our sovereignty must not be compromised by climate change. We welcome the work of the International Law Commission on this critically important and timely issue for consideration by the Sixth Committee.

Tonga looks forward to taking our important work forward at the twenty-fourth session of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change under the leadership of Poland in December. We seek to strongly address the adverse impacts of climate change and the urgent need for innovation in adaptation for SIDS.

Tonga engaged in this year's first intergovernmental conference on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in the high seas and the seabed. We are hopeful that a gradual convergence of views will result in a zero-draft of a legally binding instrument for consideration at the second and third meetings of the intergovernmental conference, to be held in March and August 2019, respectively.

Tonga has also continued its engagement at the International Seabed Authority in ensuring the appropriate management of the resources of the area. Tonga is grateful to the members of the Authority for its re-election this year to the Council, and we look forward to working together on the development of the important draft exploitation regulations. Tonga also looks forward to hosting the first regional International Seabed Authority workshop, in early 2019, to explore the benefits of seabed mining to the blue economy of Pacific Islands and to progressing development of a regional treaty on deep sea mining.

We would like to acknowledge Italy's ongoing partnership with Tonga through the joint committee in strengthening Tonga's capacity in the field of the environment and the ocean. We also acknowledge the work of the secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Pew Charitable Trust on the regional treaty.

Tonga commissioned its first independent power producer-owned solar farm last year and strongly believes that it can achieve its 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2020 through more and stronger public-private partnership arrangements. Tonga wishes to acknowledge the partnership it has established with the Government of Austria, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Pacific Community to establish the Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, a specialized regional entity to support private-sector investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency in the Pacific islands. We would also like to recognize and acknowledge the announcement made by the Government of Norway of its commitment to provide $2 million in support of the important work of the Centre.

Finally, sustainable development — whether it be, inter alia, through good health and well-being, climate action, life below water or affordable and clean

energy — can be realized only through international peace and security. We continue to look to the Security Council to protect the innocent from threats to international peace and security in any form, be they traditional threats such as armed conflict or newer threats such as climate change, to ensure that no one is left behind.

May Almighty God guide and bless the President of the General Assembly, all the States Members of the United Nations and their respective Governments and peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty King Tupou VI, King of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ibrahim Keita, President of the Republic of Mali

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Keita (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey the most cordial greetings of the Malian people, from Kayes to Kidal and from Sikasso to Taoudenni, passing through Konna in the Mopti region. I would like to extend my warm congratulations to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. That is a choice that honours her and, beyond that, her beautiful country of Ecuador, with which Mali has excellent relations in terms of cooperation. I wish to say to the President that, with the help of the United Nations and of the international community, Mali has today reached a significant milestone in its destiny following the successful presidential elections we recently held.

As is customary, I should also like to congratulate the President's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia, for the outstanding results he achieved during the seventy-second session. Let me also express my deepest gratitude to the Secretary-General of our common Organization, Mr. António Guterres, for his leadership and many initiatives aimed at further strengthening the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations.

Before continuing, I wish to pay shining tribute to the memory of the late Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General, who was taken from us on 18 August. I remember him as a great African diplomat who worked throughout his life to promote international peace, security and development across the world.

Mali welcomes the President's decision to place the current session under the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". This theme is certainly of paramount importance for all States Members of our Organization. Its aims and principles remain relevant, including in the areas of preventing and managing the many crises that we, the peoples of the United Nations, face.

For its part, Mali commends the immense and multifaceted contribution of the United Nations to its ongoing stabilization process. I would like to pay tribute to the women and men of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali for their commitment and sacrifice in a complex and difficult security context.

As leaders we have a collective responsibility to do more and better in order to render our Organization even more relevant and effective for all. To do so, the United Nations requires reforms that will lead to a peaceful, inclusive, equitable and sustainable international community. In that regard, Mali welcomes the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General in the spheres of development, peace and security.

However, we need to reinforce those initiatives by agreeing to also reform some of the principal organs, including the Security Council and the General Assembly, including when it comes to their respective compositions and working methods. It is also at the cost of those essential reforms that we will collectively be able to fulfil the deepest aspirations of our peoples and

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

The year 2018 is devoted to pursuing and strengthening the democratic and republican steps taken by Mali and its people towards peace, stability and development to the benefit of all populations of the Sahel region, and indeed beyond. Despite the numerous challenges that my country is facing, the presidential elections were able to take place within the constitutional timelines on 29 July and 12 August, in conditions welcomed by the entire international community. The inclusive nature of the organization of the elections, attested to by the participation of all political and civil society stakeholders, allowed citizens to freely express their choice and to prove the political, democratic and republican maturity of the Malian people.

For my part, upon the conclusion of the elections, I took full measure of the confidence that the Malian nation had just renewed in me. That is why I am committed to restoring trust between the State and its citizens to further improve the country's governance. Moreover, I will work relentlessly for the diligent and inclusive implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, outcome of the Algiers process, which, I will not cease to repeat, is the only alternative for my country to reconnect with peace and stability, a prerequisite for all development. To achieve those goals in the context of my country, a sacred union of all forces of the nation is required. Likewise, I reiterate my unwavering commitment to give pride of place to dialogue and consultation in the management of public affairs.

I remain determined to advance the peace process in Mali to ensure that my country emerges from the worst crisis in its history. Therefore, under my authority, the Government and other Malian actors, with the support of our partners, have achieved significant progress in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. Among these major achievements, I wish to underscore that there have been no clashes or confrontations between the Malian armed forces and armed movements since the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed in May 2015. I also happily recall the restoration of Malian authority to Kidal and other areas of the country. The presence of the State in these regions, which were hit hard by the crisis, has made it possible, among other things, to open classes for the benefit of children and contributed to the gradual provision of the necessary basic services so that the people can enjoy the dividends of peace.

Moreover, I note with satisfaction the establishment and ongoing operationalization of territorial communities in the Ménaka and Taoudenni regions, the establishment of interim authorities in the five northern regions, the launch of the operations of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, and progress in the processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security-sector reform.

I am fully aware that these gains are fragile. I am also aware that we need to do more and better. This is the purpose of the road map of 22 March. I have instructed the Government to honour its commitments pursuant to these mechanisms. However, I must stress that political will alone will not be enough to fulfil all the commitments undertaken in the Agreement. Adequate technical and financial support will also be required. I take this opportunity to reiterate my call for the effective and rapid mobilization of the resources pledged by our partners with a view to helping us achieve all commitments contained in the road map by the agreed deadlines.

I can also assure the Assembly that the people of Mali are most grateful for the active solidarity of the international community in the form of the presence and support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the European forces, the French Operation Barkhane, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and neighbouring countries.

In addition to the devastating effects of climate change on the living conditions of our population, the Sahel has for several years faced terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking of all kinds, especially of drugs, arms, illicit goods and migrants, and money-laundering. A war for the anti-Christ, from before the Prophet; a war waged on behalf of darkness, in which death is not an accident, a battlefield casualty or even or a supreme sacrifice but the ultimate goal — that is what we are dealing with in the Sahel. It is all too easy to understand the urgency of the universal call to fight against terrorism.

We established the G-5 Sahel, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, in Nouakchott in November 2014, to pool our efforts to

address our region's security and development issues, having fully grasped the link between the fragility of States and the precariousness our populations at times experience, and how certain interests may seek to use it to subversive ends. However, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force is struggling to become fully operational as it lacks the appropriate mandate and, in particular, sufficient funding.

We believe that the fight against terrorism in the Sahel is an important contribution to global security. That is why we continue to ask the Security Council to authorize the deployment of the Force under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, with adequate, sustainable and predictable funding, including through the United Nations, so as to enable it to carry out his mandate consistently and effectively. In the same vein, we invite our bilateral and multilateral partners, who made pledges of financial contributions in February at the Brussels Conference, to honour those commitments to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. In parallel with the security response, the G-5 Sahel is working to implement its Priority Investment Programme to address development challenges, which are among the root causes of instability in our shared region.

At the national level, I have made the fight against poverty one of the priorities of my second five-year term. During my swearing-in, on 4 September, I pledged before the Malian people to do all in my power to optimize our system of national solidarity so as to forge a Mali where no one is left behind. I want to launch a new social model based on equality and social justice and that will create the conditions for everyone to succeed. Promoting Malian youth will be at the centre of my work over the next five years. I have made young people the great cause of my second term. I will commit to a national youth pact through significant investments in renewing our education and training system, and to promote employment.

In the same vein, I will not only continue but step up the implementation of major road infrastructure, agriculture, water, energy and social housing projects. I remain convinced that implementing these priority actions will accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national level. In that regard, Mali is pleased to have presented in July, here in New York, its voluntary national report on SDG implementation.

As a country of origin and transit as well as a destination for migrants, Mali welcomes the conclusion of negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration — and, I would add, humane migration. This collective decision gives hope to the 250 million migrants throughout the world and, beyond them, to all of humankind at a time when migration has become a major issue for all States. Mali will, of course, play an active role at the international conference to be held in Marrakech in December with a view to the formal adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which now offers us a comprehensive framework for managing migration governance globally. At the same time, Mali will continue to shoulder its share of responsibility in managing migratory flows, in accordance with its national migration policy.

Despite our domestic situation, the people and Government of Mali remain attuned to the situation in Africa and the rest of the world. In Africa, we welcome the normalization of diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, as well as the conclusion of a peace agreement between our brothers in South Sudan. We also thoroughly commend the successful holding of legislative elections in our fellow Republic of Mauritania, and praise the people of that brotherly and friendly nation for its political maturity and commitment to democracy.

However, we are deeply concerned at the situation in Libya, which regrettably continues to negatively impact the security and stability of the Sahel region. In the light of this situation, which has lasted for too long, we call urgently on the international community to persuade the Libyan parties to prioritize dialogue and seek a lasting solution to the crisis.

We are also following with concern the situation in the Middle East, especially in the occupied territories. The people of Mali reaffirm their support to the brotherly people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle for self-determination. The Government of Mali calls for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at reaching a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and within secure and internationally recognized borders.

In humanitarian terms, Mali is concerned about the precarious situation of the 65 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide as a result of armed conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.

I am thinking in particular of my compatriots who are refugees in neighbouring countries, which I thank for their hospitality and generosity. I assure those compatriots that the Government will spare no effort in continuing to assist them and to create the conditions for them to return home in safety and dignity.

Mali has never faltered in its belief in international solidarity and cherishes its cooperation with the United Nations, which today provides us with a range of support. Mali, which I have the privilege of leading today, reaffirms its commitment to playing its full part in building a peaceful, equitable and prosperous world for all.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the profound gratitude of the people and theGovernment of Mali to the United Nations and our bilateral and multilateral partners for their unwavering support to the peace process in Mali. For my part, I reaffirm my full commitment to sparing no effort to ensure that the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emanating from the Algiers process, is implemented diligently and fully.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mali for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lourenço (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): The General Assembly is holding its seventy-third session at a special moment as we pay tribute to two towering figures of world politics, both sons of Africa: Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan.

Today, exactly one year since my inauguration as President of the Republic of Angola, I have the honour, on behalf of the Angolan people, to address from this rostrum for the first time the entire international community, represented here by its highest dignitaries. I salute the Heads of State and Government present here, as well as the leaders of the various international organizations and bodies, whom I believe to be working directly for the future of our planet.

I take this opportunity to thank the entire international community for its support for peace and reconciliation in my country, Angola. I also offer my particular gratitude to the United Nations for the decisive role it played in establishing lasting peace in Angola through two peace missions — the United Nations Angola Verification Mission and the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola — and for the important work of its specialized agencies, funds and programmes, in particular UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

We also believe that Angola's experience in building peace and pursuing reconciliation between parties in conflict has served as a positive example for the United Nations, providing useful insights for approaching peace processes in other parts of the world. Angola has unique experience in building and maintaining lasting peace, continuously deepening national reconciliation, social inclusion and mutual forgiveness, and healing the wounds of the armed conflict, which ended almost 16 years ago.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We gather in the General Assembly to discuss and resolve the most serious problems and conflicts that threaten the very survival of humankind. I am referring to the hunger and poverty that affect millions of citizens around the world, global warming and its consequences, mass migration and especially illegal migration, trafficking in drugs, in human organs, and in children and women for forced prostitution, religious intolerance and extremism, terrorism, inter-ethnic armed conflicts, war among nations or even the uncontrolled proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Established 73 years ago with the declared purpose of restoring universal peace and harmony,

conferring equal rights on nations large and small, and establishing a world of cooperation, progress and well-being, the United Nations is still far from achieving the goals enshrined in its Charter. While it is true that, immediately following that establishment, the immediate polarization of the planet into two antagonistic political and economic systems hindered the operationalization of principles favouring international peace and security, it would be unfair to deny that the United Nations has played a commendable role in ending colonialism, promoting human rights, supporting international development and cooperation, and managing and containing flashpoints of tension around the world.

Despite the progress made to date, we must acknowledge the long-standing conflicts yet to be settled, such as that between the Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, which can be resolved only through a solution based on two States living peacefully side by side, as advocated by the United Nations and the overwhelming majority of its Member States.

We welcome the recent efforts of the United States of America, North Korea and South Korea, with the contribution of the People's Republic of China, towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which has considerably reduced tensions that threatened to trigger a nuclear conflict that would endanger not only the region but international security in general.

With the end of the so-called Cold War, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the momentous emergence of a new political paradigm oriented towards multilateralism, the United Nations eagerly resumed its work towards building a peaceful world order. We believe that, by working diligently together, we can achieve this goal.

Today, in a time of ascendant globalization, there is no justification for the continued proliferation of apparently unresolvable conflicts of varying scale in several parts of the world, or for entire populations to continue suffering their tragic consequences, virtually abandoned to their fate. It is against this backdrop that many voices are demanding profound reform of the United Nations so that it can better reflect today's world, where the emergence of new centres of economic and financial power and technological and scientific advances fully justify changes to the Organization's structures and intervention mechanisms, as well as the enlargement and reform of the Security Council to better represent the various geopolitical regions of our planet.

The political configuration of today's world, in which local, regional and intra-State conflicts represent the principal focus of international tensions and threats to peace, requires the United Nations to play an increasingly active role in promoting and assisting political, social and economic processes of democratization. This is the best way to resolve conflicts, be they domestic, international, ethnic or religious, which in most cases arise as a result of policies of authoritarianism or exclusion, intolerance, radicalism or interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. International terrorism, transnational organized crime, illegal immigration, xenophobia, trafficking in people and in drugs, and other scourges have today reached new proportions, affecting the quality of life of the inhabitants of the planet and calling for coordination at the highest level among all States Members of our Organization.

The seventy-third session of the General Assembly is being held under the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". The United Nations should therefore attach priority to promoting and upholding human rights and strive to solve humankind's global problems — such as those relating to security, the environment, reducing inequality between the rich and the poor, and development — with a view to safeguarding world peace. We advocate the decentralization of the global financial system, based both on the promotion of trade and regional economic integration systems, and the enhancement of regional financial institutions on terms that allow for more sustainable economic development.

Throughout our history as an independent country, our cooperation with the United Nations has always been a constant; it has helped us not only to relaunch our economy, but also to engage in seeking to build peace, democracy and development in southern and central Africa. The Republic of Angola stands ready to continue supporting all efforts to promote cooperation among all nations of the world in building peace and strengthening cooperation, trade and investment relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Angola for the statement he has just made.

Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bermúdez (*spoke in Spanish*): It is impossible to stand here speaking from this rostrum on behalf of Cuba and not recall historic moments before the General Assembly that are among our most cherished memories. Fidel Castro, Ernesto Guevara, Raúl Castro Ruz and the Chancellor of Dignity, Raúl Roa, to mention only the most illustrious, here raised their voices on behalf not only of our people but also of other non-aligned peoples of Latin America and Caribbean, Africa and Asia, together with whom we have fought for more than half a century for a fair international order, that is still far from having been achieved.

That failure is absurd but consistent with the irrationality of a world in which the richest 0.7 per cent of the population can claim 46 per cent of all wealth, while the poorest 70 per cent of the population has access to only 2.7 per cent of that wealth, 3.46 billion people survive in poverty, 821 million live in hunger, 758 million are illiterate and 844 million lack basic services, such as drinking water. All these figures are, of course, prepared and regularly manipulated by global organizations, but it seems that they have failed to raise sufficient awareness among the so-called international community.

These facts are not the result of socialism, as the President of the United States said in this Hall yesterday (see A/73/PV.6). They are consequences of capitalism, especially imperialism and neoliberalism, of the egoism and exclusion inherent to that system, and of an economic, political, social and cultural paradigm that concentrates wealth in the hands of a minority as a significant majority pay the price through exploitation and poverty.

Capitalism financed colonialism; gave rise to fascism, terrorism and apartheid; and spread war and conflict, violations of the sovereignty or self-determination of peoples, and the repression of workers, minorities, refugees and migrants. Capitalism runs counter to solidarity and democratic participation. The patterns of production and consumption characteristic of capitalism promote plundering and militarism, threaten peace, lead to violations of human rights; and pose the greatest danger to the ecological balance of the planet and the survival of the human race.

No one should mistakenly believe that humankind lacks the material, financial or technological resources to eradicate poverty, hunger, preventable diseases and other scourges. What is missing is political will among the industrialized countries, which have the moral duty, the historical responsibility and abundant resources to solve the most pressing global problems. The truth is that while funding shortfalls are cited as justification for failing to attain the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or address the increasing impacts of climate change, $1.74 trillion was wasted on military expenditure in 2017 — the highest figure since the end of the Cold War.

Climate change is another unavoidable reality and a question of survival for the human race, especially for small island developing States. Some of its effects are already irreversible. Scientific evidence shows that the average temperature has increased by 1.1°C compared to pre-industrial levels, and that nine out of 10 people living in urban areas breathe polluted air. However, the United States, one of the major polluters, both historically and today, refuses to join the international community in implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In so doing, it endangers the very lives of future generations and the survival of all species, including humans.

Furthermore, as if there were not enough threats to humankind and its dazzling creations, it is a fact that military and nuclear hegemony not only continues but is extending its reach, dashing the hopes of the majority

of peoples for general and complete disarmament. Cuba shares this ideal and, as evidence of its commitment to that aim, on 31 January became the fifth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It is impossible for the Organization, born of the desire to overcome through dialogue among nations the destruction wrought by an horrific war, to remain silent about the dangers that threaten us all with the exacerbation of local conflicts, wars of aggression disguised as humanitarian intervention, the forceful overthrow of sovereign Governments, so-called soft coups and interference in other States' internal affairs — all of which are established behaviours on the part of certain Powers, under a wild range of pretexts.

International cooperation to promote and protect human rights for all is imperative, but it is manipulated in a discriminatory and selective way in an attempt to dominate, violating the rights of peoples to peace, self-determination and development.

Cuba rejects the militarization of outer space and cyberspace, as well as the covert and illegal use of information and communication technologies to attack other States.

Multilateralism and full respect for the norms and principles of international law to advance towards a democratic, equitable multipolar world are necessary to ensure peaceful coexistence, maintain international peace and security and find lasting solutions to systemic problems.

Running counter to this vision, threats or use of force, unilateralism, pressure, retaliation and sanctions — which increasingly characterize the behaviour and rhetoric of the United States Government and its abusive use of the veto power in the Security Council to impose its political agenda — represent immense challenges that threaten the very institution of the United Nations. Why do we not simply implement the promised strengthening of the General Assembly as the principal deliberative, decision-making and most representative organ? Security Council reform must not be delayed or sidelined; it must be updated to reflect the times and democratize its membership and working methods.

We reiterate today what Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban revoluation Fidel Castro Ruz said on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. His sentiments reflect the most noble aspirations of the majority of humankind:

> "We lay claim to a world without hegemonism, without nuclear weapons, without interventionism, without racism, without national or religious hatred, without outrageous acts against the sovereignty of any country, a world with respect for the independence and self-determination of peoples, a world without universal models that totally disregard the traditions and culture of all the components of mankind.
>
> "We lay claim to a world without ruthless blockades that cause the death of men, women and children, young and old, like noiseless atom bombs." (*A/50/PV.35, pp. 19-20*)

More than 20 years have passed since that demand was made, and none of those ills has been cured; on the contrary, they have got worse. We have every right to ask why and the duty to insist on effective and fair solutions.

Our Americas are today the scene of persistent threats that are incompatible with the proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace, signed in Havana in 2014 by the Heads of State and Government at the second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. The current United States Administration has proclaimed the validity of the Monroe Doctrine and, in a new deployment of its imperial policy in the region, is attacking Venezuela with particular cruelty.

In this menacing climate, we reiterate our absolute support for the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution, the civic-military union of the Venezuelan people and its legitimate democratic Government, led by Constitutional President Nicolás Maduros Moros. We reject the interventionist intent of the sanctions against Venezuela, aimed at economic strangulation and damaging Venezuelan families. We reject calls to isolate that sovereign nation, which is doing no harm to anyone.

We likewise reject the attempts to destabilize the Government of Nicaragua, a peaceful country that has made remarkable social and economic progress and improved security for its citizens.

We denounce the political imprisonment of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the decision

to prevent the people from voting for Brazil's most popular leader and electing him to the presidency.

We stand in solidarity with the Caribbean nations demanding legitimate reparations for the horrific legacy of slavery as well as the fair, special and differential treatment they deserve.

We reaffirm our long-standing support for the self-determination and independence of the brotherly people of Puerto Rico.

We support Argentina's legitimate claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands.

We reiterate our full support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the establishment of two States, permitting the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination in a sovereign independent State based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We reject the unilateral action of the United States in establishing its diplomatic representation in the city of Jerusalem, which has further heightened tensions in the region. We condemn the barbarous acts committed by the Israeli forces against the civilian population in Gaza.

We reaffirm our steadfast solidarity with the Sahrawi people and support the questfor a definitive solution to the question of Western Sahara that allows them to exercise their right to self-determination and to live in peace in their territory.

We support the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the situation imposed on Syria, without foreign interference and in full respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reject any direct or indirect intervention executed without the agreement of the legitimate authorities of that country.

The continued expansion of NATO towards the Russian border is provoking significant danger, aggravated further still by the imposition of arbitrary sanctions, which we reject.

We demand that the nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran be implemented.

We welcome the process of inter-Korean rapprochement and dialogue, which represents the path towards lasting peace, reconciliation and stability on the Korean peninsula. At the same time, we strongly condemn the imposition of unilateral and unjust sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and foreign interference in Korean internal affairs.

The violation of international trade rules, and the imposition of sanctions against China, the European Union and other countries will result in harmful effects, in particular for developing countries.

We favour dialogue and cooperation, thanks to which we can report today that the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Cuba has provisionally entered into force, representing a strong foundation on which to build beneficial ties between the parties.

The Government of the United States maintains its aggressive rhetoric towards Cuba and a policy aimed at subverting the political, social, economic and cultural system of my country. Contrary to the interests of both peoples and giving in to pressure from minority interests, the United States Government has engaged in fabricating pretexts to stoke false tensions and hostilities that benefit no one. This is in stark contrast with the fact that we maintain formal diplomatic relations and participate in mutually beneficial cooperation programmes in a limited number of areas. Our peoples share increasingly close historical and cultural bonds, as expressed through the arts, sports, science and the environment, among other areas. The potential for a healthy commercial relationship is well recognized, and a genuine relationship of respect would benefit the interests of the entire region.

However, the defining core component of the bilateral relationship remains the embargo, which is intended to strangle the Cuban economy, generate poverty and disrupt constitutional order. It is a cruel policy that punishes Cuban families and the entire nation. It is the most comprehensive and long-standing system of economic sanctions ever implemented against any country. It has been and remains a major obstacle to the country's development and to the realization of the aspirations for progress and well-being of several generations of Cubans. As reiterated from this very rostrum for many years, through its aggressive extraterritorial implementation the embargo seriously damages the sovereignty and interests of all countries.

On behalf of the Cuban people, I thank the General Assembly for its near-unanimous rejection of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against my country. However,

that Government's actions against my country go even further, to include public and covert programmes of gross interference in Cuba's internal affairs, using tens of millions of dollars officially allocated in the budget to that purpose, in violation of the norms and principles upon which this Organization is based and, in particular, of Cuba's sovereignty as an independent nation.

Cuba stands ready to foster respectful and civilized relations with the United States Government, based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. That is the will of the Cuban people and an aspiration that we know to be shared by the majority of the citizens of the United States, especially the Cubans living there.

We will continue tirelessly demanding the end of the cruel economic, commercial and financial embargo, the return of the territory illegally occupied by the United States Naval Base in Guantánamo and adequate compensation to our people for the thousands of deaths and injuries and the economic and property damage caused by this aggression over so many years.

Cuba will always remain willing to engage in dialogue and cooperation based on respect and equal treatment. We will never make concessions that affect our national sovereignty and independence. We will not barter our principles or accept conditions. In spite of the embargo, the hostility and actions of the United States to impose regime change on Cuba, the Cuban revolution remains alive and strong, steadfast and faithful to its principles.

The enemies of the revolution should not be deluded by the generational change in our Government. We represent continuity, not any sort of rupture. Cuba has continued taking steps to improve its model of economic and social development with a view to building a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation. That is the path that our people havefreely chosen. The Cuban people will never return to the disgraces of the past, from which it freed itself by the greatest of sacrifices over 150 years of struggle for independence and dignity. In accordance with the will of the overwhelming majority of Cuban women and men, we shall press forward in the work that began almost 60 years ago.

In this conviction, we have initiated a process of constitutional reform — a truly participatory democratic exercise with public discussion of the draft text which will later be submitted for approval by referendum. I am certain that there will be no changes in our strategic objectives and that the irrevocable nature of socialism will be reaffirmed. The principles of our foreign policy will remain unchanged. As the First Secretary of our Party, Mr. Raúl Castro Ruz, said, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations:

> "The international community can always depend on Cuba to raise its honest voice against injustice, inequality, underdevelopment, discrimination and manipulation and for the establishment of a more equitable and fair international order that really focuses on the human being, his dignity and well-being." (*A/70/PV.14, p.6*)

The Cuba on behalf of which I speak today is proud to carry the torch of that independent sovereign policy, which is bound by links of brotherhood and solidarity to the world's poor, who produce all the world's wealth but are condemned to live in poverty by an unjust world order under the cover of words like "democracy", "freedom" and "human rights" — words which those in power have, in fact, emptied of all meaning.

I am moved to be speaking from the same rostrum from which Fidel spoke the truth so powerfully 58 years ago that it still resonates with the representatives of more than 190 nations who, rejecting extortion and pressure, year on year turn the voting screen a dignified green with lights approving our demand for an end to the embargo. I close with the hope that the noble aspirations shared by the majority of humankind may be realized before yet further generations take to this rostrum to demand the very same things we demand today and our historic predecessors did before us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Weah: I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on behalf of the Government and the people of Liberia. I should like at the outset to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, and the Government and the people of Ecuador, on her election to serve as President of the Assembly at its seventy-third session. With our eyes on history, Liberia takes special note of the fact she is the fourth woman to serve as President of the General Assembly, and we welcome her election.

I should also like to express my appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres, whose dynamism and far-sighted leadership continues to strengthen the United Nations in the face of perennial global challenges.

Just two weeks ago, we joined millions in Ghana and around the world in bidding final farewell to former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who devoted his life to peacemaking and conflict resolution — a calling in which he was renowned and successful. With his passing, Africa has lost one of its most illustrious sons and the world has lost one of the most outstanding diplomats of our time. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

Late last year, Liberians participated in presidential and legislative elections, the results of which represented a major shift in the underlying fundamentals of Liberian political dynamics. In an orderly, lawful and peaceful manner, Liberians voted in overwhelming numbers for change and hope. This was the first time in 73 years that Liberians enjoyed a peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected Government to another. At the end of the long campaign, when the results were announced after the run-off, it became clear that the pendulum had swung in the direction of youthful leadership and the paradigm had shifted in favour of change and transformation.

The United Nations and its various bodies, as well as regional organizations and many of our bilateral partners and friends, directly witnessed the maturity of the Liberian electorate, our respect for law and order, and our successful democratic processes. The mantle and responsibility for leading that transformation was thereby placed on my shoulders, as the standard-bearer of the winning Coalition for Democratic Change, with my inauguration, on 22 January, as the twenty-fourth President of Liberia. The challenges of leadership are enormous, but, in each and every one of those challenges, I see opportunities to make things better and to bring permanent improvements to the lives of all Liberians, as we devise policies and programmes that will have a lasting and positive impact on the lives of our citizens.

The umbrella programme under which we intend to pursue prosperity is the Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity, our national development plan for the next five years. The Agenda is not only for the poor, it is for the benefit of all Liberians. But it is policy framework that gives priority to the alleviation of poverty, and its core objective and focus are to reduce the marginalization of the most vulnerable, while also creating a conducive atmosphere for middle- and upper-income Liberians to grow and prosper. We want to build a harmonious society based on the goal of economic empowerment, especially for the underprivileged. Our Pro-Poor Agenda is therefore designed to give power to the people, promote economic diversification, protect sustainable peace and encourage good governance. We appeal to our friends, bilateral partners and private investors to support the Agenda.

As we focus on action plans to implement our development Agenda, we are acutely aware of the vulnerability of our youthful population, who are clearly disadvantaged as a result of high unemployment and a lack of access to quality educational opportunities. Our plan is to reverse their unfortunate situation and help them become productive citizens through the provision of adequate educational facilities at the high-school and college levels for those who remain interested in pursuing academic programmes. For those youths left behind due to the disastrous civil crisis and who have outgrown their school years, my Government is investing in technical vocational education and training programmes to build their entrepreneurial and marketable skillsets.

Conscious of the importance and impact of infrastructure on social and economic development, my Government has identified investment in roads, energy and ports as our key priority, and is therefore soliciting funding and other technical expertise to undertake

those projects in pursuit of our goal to connect our cities and towns and power our economy.

Agriculture, Liberia's comparative advantage, has also been identified as one of our major poverty-alleviation instruments, since it can lead us to self-sufficiency in food production and self-employment, as well as open doors to industrialization. With the implementation of a new special economic zone, we intend to attract labour-intensive light manufacturing.

Drawing on the experience of the 2014 Ebola epidemic, which took the lives of thousands of Liberians and health workers, we intend to efficiently and properly organize our health-care delivery system, to ensure that the health and well-being of our people is improved.

Finally, we are placing emphasis on national security in order to enable our people to move and live freely without fear. With the recent withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), we are now in charge of our own security. We thank the international community for the sacrifices made in securing and maintaining the peace in Liberia after our protracted civil conflict. In that regard, I would like to express my personal appreciation to Mr. Farid Zarif of Afghanistan, who, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia and the last Head of UNMIL, from 2015 to 2018, supervised the orderly withdrawal of troops, while simultaneously securing the peaceful environment that allowed a very robust political campaign to take place without incident.

My country has finally turned the corner, having now experienced more years of peace than the preceding years of war, guided by our Peace Agreement, signed in Accra 15 years ago. We thank the members and the Security Council for the UNMIL peacekeeping mission, which brought stability and helped us rebuild our institutions and communities. We are a peacekeeping success story, and we are grateful for the support we were given.

But a nation that has experienced civil war must never take peace for granted or forget the long shadow that years of conflict still cast over people's lives. We must realize and appreciate that ours is still a fragile peace.

Our people across the country still bear the scars of conflict. We therefore intend to initiate a series of national peace dialogues throughout Liberia. We must relaunch those difficult conversations at the local level and include our youth, so that they, and we, do not repeat the costly mistakes of the past. It is clear to me that such frank exchanges are an essential step in bringing lasting healing, reconciliation and unity to our people. Our agenda is not one of division, but rather one that intends to provide an enabling environment for a united and reconciled people to be able to benefit and prosper from the economic dividends of peace.

I recall with humility that I was once selected to serve as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, a mission that I undertook with passion, conviction and commitment to support and inform the world about principles for which this Organization stands. I was also privileged to be appointed as Messenger of Peace for Liberia, a mandate to apply these principles: preserving and maintaining peace, which the peacekeeping mission had so successful restored. I deeply and personally cherish those principles.

Therefore, today, in concluding, I wish to reaffirm the support of my Government for the work of the United Nations in striving to achieve global peace, counter terrorism and reform the United Nations, as well as to achieve reform, security, good governance and the advancement of the principle of universal human rights. We further reiterate our commitment to the rule of law, the alleviation of poverty, gender equality, the elimination of gender-based violence and the empowerment of women, girls and young people. I also believe that the overwhelming mandate I received from the Liberian people is one to end corruption in the public service, and I remain fully committed to that task.

With the generous assistance and strong support of the United Nations, as well as that of other international institutions and Member States, and with God's blessing, we will fulfil our agenda to lift our people out of poverty to prosperity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kiska: It takes decades to build peace and trust, but it only takes seconds, one selfish or narrow-minded decision, to break them. We gather here every year to enhance what we have been building for over 70 years: an idea of a world based on rules and the principles of humanity, responsibility, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, where wars and armed conflicts have no place, where disputes are solved in dialogue and where challenges are addressed through cooperation.

We are continuously becoming wealthier and more advanced. With all the resources we can generate together, we might have the means necessary to reach even the poorest of the poor. Yet we are more often driven by selfishness and short-term interests. Instead of enlarging freedom, cooperation and healthy competition, we introduce restrictions and trade wars. While globalization has created unprecedented wealth, inequalities still divide our planet. Economic figures are positive but, in many parts of our world, have hardly translated into improved well-being and dignity for every human being. At an amazing pace, we continue to develop technologies allowing us to connect, communicate and be closer globally. But the distance between people and the gap in understanding and empathy towards other cultures remains huge. Yet, thanks to innovation, the world has never been smaller. What happens thousands of kilometres away can turn into a global problem in a matter of minutes, and global problems have a direct impacts on our citizens. Against that backdrop, the United Nations plays an irreplaceable role. It has enormous potential to overcome those paradoxes. Its strong principles, responsible action and ability to drive cooperation are what make it so unique. Let me touch upon those aspects in more detail.

Rules and principles and their enforcement must remain the backbone of the Organization because today it seems that playing by the rules has become old-fashioned, as if ignoring them were a sign of strength and respect a sign of weakness.

The number of armed conflicts has increased in recent years. In only 2016 and 2017, the number of conflicts equalled the peak of the Cold War era. The number of civilian casualties rise. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of innocent people directly affected by conflicts and war.

Sovereignty and territorial integrity are the DNA of global and regional stability and security. But the occupation of Georgia and Ukraine and destabilization in the region are just one of many examples of respect for rules being replaced by ruthless power politics.

The threat of nuclear weapons resonates much more often than we could have imagined in the recent years. We hope that the developments under way in North Korea will bring about tangible results. We must make sure that agreements will be kept. And if not, we need to act with resolve.

Too often we see thousands of civilians massacred by their very regimes, or in endless conflicts, as if we had become unmoved by the breaching of the very norms of humanity and stopped counting the innocent lives lost in Syria, Yemen, Palestine, Myanmar, South Sudan and elsewhere.

Together we have agreed that the use of weapons of mass destruction is unacceptable, without exception. Any use of chemical weapons must be a red line and not tolerated — an automatic trigger for resolute action. It is therefore shameful to see the tyrannical regime in Syria repeatedly use chemical weapons against its own citizens for the sake of survival. As for us, Europeans, it is shocking to witness the attacks in Salisbury, Great Britain, with the perpetrators avoiding responsibility and shamelessly denying the facts.

It is our responsibility to make sure that no perpetrator escapes unpunished. We must firmly show that we will not allow our principles to be bent to aggressive politics, that we will not undermine the authority of this Organization by inaction.

We all have a great responsibility towards our citizens, the international community and the planet to lead, to stand firmly behind our values and to defend them. We must listen to our people not only to address their problems, but also to see far enough to inspire them, in particular vis-à-vis extremism, populism,

radicalism, xenophobia, racism, propaganda, lies, the twisting of the truth, and terrorism. Their goals are simple and yet effective: to spread fear, hatred and doubt, erode our beliefs and values and undermine our unity. They provide seemingly quick and simple solutions, provoking confrontation and drawing dividing lines. It is no surprise they find fertile soil everywhere we fail to deliver. People living in poverty, afflicted by hunger or disease, with no access to education or health care are among their natural targets. And we will not win this fight if we do not offer those people and their children hope for a better life of dignity, free of fear of hunger or death. That is why our unity in implementing the development goals, in fighting climate change and addressing migration is so important. We need to turn our plans and our promises into a global reality. Failing to do so only sends a signal of our weakness, leaving those people and this planet as easy prey.

The unprecedented progress and innovation of new technology brings with it new challenges. I am very concerned about malicious activities in cyberspace. Growing manipulation through social media is undermining democracy worldwide and indoctrinating our populations. Cyberspace knows no borders. It is anonymous and provides unlimited room to strike at us. The choice of means is endless: to manipulate elections, to influence decisions, to spy on us or sneak into our computers, networks and everyday lives. It is as dangerous as any conventional threat. As such it requires our utmost attention. But, to date, we have done nothing or little about it. Global companies prefer their profits over their responsibilities. It is therefore up to us, States, to set new standards and, where needed, regulations — because today we do not lead, we only follow. And the price of inaction may soon be very high.

Mr. Messahel (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Too often, we hear political leaders issue calls to fight extremism and propaganda with the same tools and rhetoric. They could not be more wrong. The only honest answer is to support tolerance, freedom of speech and critical thinking in our societies. The only potent defence is to strengthen our values and to bring candid solutions to people's problems. Only when we deliver may our democratic ideology become immune to extremist ideas and propaganda. In that effort, we need to remember that free media are our allies, not our enemies. They are guardians of our principles. They are often the first to spot when things go in the wrong direction. They hold those who break the rules accountable.

We should therefore be worried indeed about increased attacks on journalists, attempts to eliminate the freedom of the press, and growing restrictions on civil societies. Sadly, last year dozens of journalists were killed, hundreds imprisoned and thousands oppressed. The climate of hate continues to spread, portraying them as enemies of the State, enemies of nations or even of faiths. But they play a key role in our mission for a better world, and as such they must be protected.

None of our countries, even the most powerful, is big enough to face present challenges on its own, be they migration, terrorism, climate change or sustaining solid economic growth. While our most important duty as politicians is to serve our people, that will be possible only if we truly understand the value of cooperation and that, if we truly want to change the world for the better, we need to think of others — individuals, nations and countries — and patiently explain this principle to our people.

As Kofi Annan said,

> "More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations".

I admit that multilateralism is not always easy, but it is the only sustainable way. The United Nations will serve its purpose as long as we, the Member States, hold true to our commitments and stand ready to defend rules and principles. The noble ideals and strong principles of this Organization — the steadfast values of tolerance, empathy, compassion and solidarity — are our best tools for facing any challenge. If we protect those values, the moral compass of humankind, then the evil of aggressive power politics, selfish nationalism, extremism and racism will not prevail. We may not know what comes tomorrow, but we know how to respond if we let the moral compass guide us. The best assurance we can have in times of uncertainty is to protect our values.

I wish to conclude by congratulating the President of the General Assembly on assuming her duties. The challenges I spoke about are not easy to tackle, but I have full confidence that the United Nations and her Office will guide the Assembly through these times

with the utmost dedication to fulfilling our common goals. I therefore also wish proudly to thank and congratulate her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for the professionalism with which he served the United Nations and its peoples.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moon Jae-in (*spoke in Korean; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to express my deepest condolences on the passing away of Kofi Annan, the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. The world will forever remember his name, which has been etched in the road to peace.

I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I hope the United Nations will be able to reach out to every corner of the globe through this session. I also hope that the United Nations will make further progress in contributing to the international community under the excellent leadership of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

As I did last year (see A/72/PV.11), I stand here once again with a sense of urgency and excitement. Something miraculous has taken place on the Korean peninsula over the past year. For the first time in history, the leader of North Korea crossed the Military Demarcation Line to visit Panmunjeom. A historic summit between the United States and North Korea was held on the island of Sentosa in Singapore. Chairman Kim Jong Un and I removed the shadow of war and resolved to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. At the United States-North Korea summit, the two sides agreed to work towards achieving the complete denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, thereby ending hostile relations and establishing a permanent peace regime. President Trump and Chairman Kim took action and gave hope to those who desire peace an around the world. North Korea dismantled its nuclear test site in Punggye-ri, under the observation of the international community. The United States and the Republic of Korea suspended large-scale joint military exercises and built trust. I would like to thank and salute President Trump and Chairman Kim's courage and resolve as they usher in a new era on the Korean peninsula, as well as in United States-North Korea relations.

Last week in Pyongyang, I met Chairman Kim for the third time and reached an agreement once again to turn the Korean peninsula into a land of peace, free from nuclear weapons and threats. Chairman Kim expressed his hope of completing denuclearization as soon as possible to focus on economic development. Moreover, Chairman Kim expressed his commitment to permanently dismantling the missile-engine test site and launch platform in Dongchang-ri, under the observation of the international community as a first step in order to expedite progress in denuclearization. Furthermore, he expressed his firm willingness to continue to take additional denuclearization measures, including the permanent dismantlement of nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, as the United States takes corresponding measures in the spirit of the Sentosa agreement.

The Korean peninsula has remained under the Armistice for the past 65 years. Ending the Korean War is an urgent task. It is a process we must go through in order to move towards a peace regime. I look forward to seeing bold measures for denuclearization implemented among the countries concerned, thereby leading to a declaration to end the war. Regardless of the challenges that lie ahead, the leaders of the south, the north and the United States will move step by step towards peace based on mutual trust. Such a dramatic change has been possible thanks to the support and encouragement of people around the world who desire peace. The United Nations in particular gave North Korea the courage to embark upon the road to peace. I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations for its role. However, that is just the beginning. I would like to ask for continued support and cooperation from the Member

States on our journey towards complete denuclearization and permanent peace. The Republic of Korea will spare no effort to encourage North Korea's participation in the international community, while adhering to the resolutions adopted by the United Nations.

A prelude to peace on the Korean peninsula unfolded in Pyeongcheng, Gangwon province last winter. It was the moment when the Olympic Truce resolution adopted at the General Assembly in November 2017 came to precious fruition. Secretary-General Guterres and many Heads of State extended their congratulations on the participation of North Korean athletes and officials in the Pyeongcheng Olympic Winter Games. They expressed their wishes for unity and peace on the Korean peninsula. The world was awakened to the sense of a new history of peace being written. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the President of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach, for his leadership and contribution in opening the way for North Korea to participate in the Pyeongcheng Olympic Winter Games. Just over a month after the close of the Pyeongcheng Paralympic Winter Games, Chairman Kim and I met for the first time in Panmunjeom. The United Nations welcomed and actively supported the adoption of the Panmunjeom Declaration. By doing so, it provided tremendous strength to the meetings that have followed, including the second inter-Korean summit, the United States-North Korea summit and the recent inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang.

At the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, I expressed the hope that North Korea would choose peace of its own accord in order to establish sound and sustainable peace. That hope was shared by the United Nations and the entire international community. North Korea responded positively to our hopes and calls. Chairman Kim changed the direction of the political situation on the Korean peninsula through his New Year's address on the first day of this year. The participation of North Korea's athletes and delegation in the Pyeongcheng Winter Olympics provided the decisive momentum to break the impasse in building peace. On 20 April, North Korea officially ended its policy of nuclear development and has since devoted all of its efforts to economic development. On 9 September, during the ceremony marking the seventieth anniversary of its founding, North Korea expressed its commitment to peace and prosperity instead of boasting about its nuclear capabilities. North Korea moved out of long-standing isolation on its own initiative and stands before the international community once again. Now it is the international community's turn to respond positively to North Korea's new choices and efforts. We must assure Chairman Kim that he has made the right decision in committing to denuclearization. We must encourage North Korea to stay on the path that leads to permanent and solid peace.

The role of the United Nations is crucial. The Secretariat has continued its efforts for dialogue and engagement, including the invitation of North Korean officials to international conferences. The United Nations has announced its commitment to leave no one behind. My sincere hope is that the vision of the United Nations of sustainable development will be realized on the Korean peninsula. I have no doubt that, if the international community paves the way, North Korea will not stall in making strides towards peace and prosperity. The Republic of Korea will spare no effort in guiding North Korea towards that path. I would like to call on the United Nations to share its experience and wisdom.

The process of working towards denuclearization and establishing peace on the Korean peninsula is one that also leads to building peace and cooperation in North-East Asia, which is home to one fifth of the world's population and accounts for a quarter of the global economy. However, regional conflicts stand in the way of pursuing broader cooperation. We will begin the work of resolving conflicts in North-East Asia starting with the Korean peninsula.

On 15 August, I proposed the creation of an East Asian railroad community, which would involve six North-East Asian countries and the United States. The European Coal and Steel Community, which gave birth to the creation of the European Union, is a living example of what that kind of initiative could achieve. I believe that the East Asian railroad community will be able to serve as a starting point for the creation of an energy and economic community in East Asia, and, going a step further, lead to a multilateral peace and security architecture in North-East Asia. The two Koreas are working to reconnect disconnected railroads and roads. Going forward, the Republic of Korea will engage in close consultations with countries in the region on concrete steps towards the East Asian railroad community. As we work to realize the United Nations spirit of multilateralism and pave the way for a future of shared prosperity, I would like to ask for the support and cooperation of the international community.

The Republic of Korea, together with the United Nations, has weathered the storms of modern history. The United Nations and the Republic of Korea share common values and philosophies. This month, the Government of the Republic of Korea announced its vision of an inclusive nation based on a people-centred governing philosophy. We are moving towards a fair and just nation, as well as a society in which no one is discriminated against and everyone lives in harmony. Inclusiveness is also a philosophy embedded in international development cooperation. The Government of the Republic of Korea will steadily expand its contribution to development cooperation to create a global community that leaves no one behind.

The Republic of Korea is also increasing its assistance to people who are suffering from human rights violations and discrimination, in particular the most vulnerable groups, including children, youth, women and those with disabilities. We have increased our financial aid for refugees five times in the past five years. Starting from this year, Korea is providing 50,000 tons of rice every year to developing countries that are suffering from severe food crises. I believe that there needs to be a holistic approach that encompasses peace, development and human rights so as to fundamentally resolve humanitarian crises. The Government of the Republic of Korea will engage in discussions and provide support to make the United Nations relevant to all people.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Anyone who has confronted the abuse of power to advance human rights carries in his or her heart the first clause of the Declaration — "All human beings are born free and equal". In particular, I am working to realize gender equality in tangible ways, as an important part of our administrative agenda. All forms of discrimination and violence against women are being dealt with even more sternly. Korea has suffered directly from the Japanese military's mobilization of comfort women. We will actively participate in discussions within the international community with regard to the issue of women and peace and security. We will also work together with the international community in efforts to eradicate sexual violence in conflict.

Responding to climate change and transitioning to a low-carbon economy are challenges and tasks facing our generation. The Government of the Republic of Korea will raise its share of renewable energy in the nation's total power generation to 20 per cent by 2030. We will faithfully implement the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, in compliance with the Paris Agreement, and assist developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development by supporting them with climate-change responses.

For the two Koreas, the significance of the United Nations goes beyond any international organization. On 17 September 1991, at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the then 159 States Members of the United Nations unanimously adopted resolution 46/1 for the joint accession by South Korea and North Korea to the United Nations. Coincidentally, that day was the International Day of Peace. In their respective speeches, the representatives of South Korea and North Korea pledged that, although South Korea and North Korea had started as separate members, they would eventually become one some day through reconciliation, cooperation and peace (see A/46/PV.1). Now, 27 years later, South Korea and North Korea are realizing the pledge made on that day. We have crossed the barriers of division and are tearing down the walls in our hearts. We are proving to the international community that, when we come together, we have sufficient means to establish peace.

We all desire peace. Peace represents the relatives and neighbours we love and the home towns we long for. Peace means sharing what we have together. A peace we have all achieved together is a peace for all. I am confident that all members will be with us always on the path to permanent peace and denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, as well as on the journey to a peaceful world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Korea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Iohannis: I am particularly honoured to address this year's session, as 2018 is a symbolic year for Romania. One hundred years ago, Romanians accomplished their great dream, that of living together in one united country. The centenary of a united and modern Romania is not only about my country's past but, even more, about the future. My strong conviction is that a safer and prosperous future for the Romanian people can be accomplished only alongside peaceful and sustainable societies all over the world.

The United Nations, too, has reasons to celebrate this year. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is turning 70 years old, and so is the International Law Commission, the main United Nations body responsible for shaping international law in order for the international community to become a better place where international rule of law governs us all.

Such anniversaries are a reminder of our political determination to stand up for our fundamental rights and the law, although the road has neither been short nor easy. Our action as political leaders is driven by a responsibility towards our people. We serve our people when working with the United Nations, and each and every citizen needs to see a concrete impact on his or her daily life and a positive change. I therefore welcome the invitation of the President of the General Assembly to comment on the continuing relevance of the United Nations for the lives and well-being of all peoples. We have to explain the current challenges to peace, equity and sustainability of our societies and speak more about the role of the United Nations in addressing them. We must explain that we face serious threats to security, that terrorism needs a globally coordinated response and that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remain existential threats to global security. Pointing them out is necessary, but not enough. We need to address them by coming up with clear solutions. Romania is working in that respect in its region. Unfortunately, there are unresolved conflicts in the wider Black Sea area that pose serious threats to the region itself and to international security.

Three years ago, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — a unique universal agenda for progress — and set 17 ambitious goals that have a significant impact on the most pressing challenges in the everyday lives of our people. Romania, like many other countries, is in a learning process. One very useful exercise was the presentation of our national voluntary review at the High-level Political Forum in July. At the same time, we have a lot to share from our own experience. Therefore, in April 2019, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Romania will host a regional conference on the theme "The 2030 Agenda: Partnerships for Sustainable Development". The countries of our region will have a chance to share good practices and lessons learned in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda and in identifying strategic opportunities for addressing key social drivers in our region, as well as looking at areas of sustainability and common interest.

From another perspective, we are satisfied with our joint efforts to prepare for the adoption of some very important international cooperative frameworks by the end of 2018. The global compacts on refugees and regular migration will generate a common approach on migration and displaced persons at the global level. In addition, negotiations on a global pact for the environment are about to start. The development of the convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction is in progress. Another Ocean Conference will take place soon. It will be aimed at continuing engagement for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans at the global level. In addition, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism remain paramount.

The list of achievements with a direct impact on our lives does not stop there, as we do not stop making progress in our work together at the United Nations. And I believe that we can do more. We still have to work on making the whole United Nations system, including the Security Council, truly coordinated, efficient, effective, transparent, accountable and fit for the realities of the international community of the twenty-first century. The next few months will be decisive for United Nations reform. The implementation of the framework put in place as a result of the tireless work of the Secretary-General, with the support of the Member States, will reflect the level of political determination of each country. Romania will continue to support that effort.

As the next President of the Council of the European Union, in the first half of 2019, Romania is determined to strengthen the European Union-United Nations partnership. And when I speak about engagement I do not just mean politicians and diplomats. We must reach out to our young people, representatives of civil society, journalists and business people. We need them all for the cause of multilateralism and global leadership.

As the Assembly knows, Romania is running for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2020-2021. Through that candidature, we take our share of responsibility in the attempt to increase the effectiveness of the Council. We hope that our track record within the United Nations will convince the Assembly once again that Romania is committed to supporting the United Nations work for peace and development for all its Members. Peace, development and justice are foundational pillars in our multilateral strategy. We respect our partners and rely on dialogue. We count on members' most valuable support for our candidature. Romania will be a responsible partner in promoting a common United Nations agenda.

We have recognized the primary responsibility of the Security Council for international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. As many crises today are multidimensional in nature, the Security Council could play a more prominent role in addressing more aspects that impact peace and security. For example, climate change has become one of the toughest global challenges. Its consequences — be they water shortages, food insecurity, the displacement of people or rising sea levels — threaten lives all around the world. In addition to the efforts of other United Nations platforms to tackle climate-related risks, the Security Council could create a framework to address them in an integrated manner.

We welcomed the organization of a debate in the Security Council in July on aspects of peace and security related to climate change (see S/PV.8307), and we are ready to follow up on the topic if elected as a non-permanent member. Ahead of the preparation of the Secretary-General's climate summit next year, during its presidency of the Council of the European Union Romania will host an international conference on the theme "Building resilience to natural disasters", as a platform to exchange views on how to assess and more effectively address climate-related security risks and enhance the basis for a resilient future.

I thank the President of the General Assembly for the theme she chose for this year's debate and congratulate her on the important responsibilities she has assumed. Let me extend our best wishes of success and assure her of the full cooperation of Romania.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Mrs. May (United Kingdom): On behalf of the United Kingdom, let me begin by paying tribute to an outstanding leader of the United Nations, who, sadly, passed away this summer. Kofi Annan was one of the great Secretaries-General, a tireless campaigner for peace and progress and a champion of human rights and human dignity, whose influence will continue to be felt around the world for years to come. Over the course of his lifetime he witnessed the extraordinary progress that we as a community of nations have made since the Organization was founded: progress in which we have more than halved the number of people living in extreme poverty in this century alone; progress in which the number of people killed in conflicts has fallen by three quarters in just over three decades; and progress in which millions of our citizens lead healthier and longer lives and where, thanks to advances in

human knowledge, medicine, science and technology, we are presented with huge opportunities in the years ahead. Yet today many are concerned about whether or not that progress will continue and fearful about what the future holds.

For the end of the Cold War did not, as many once believed, lead to the inevitable supremacy of open economies and liberal democracies cooperating on the global stage for the common good. Today, instead, we face a loss of confidence in those very systems that have delivered so much. The belief in free markets has been challenged by the financial crisis of 2008, the concerns of those feeling left behind by globalization, the anxieties about the pace and scale of technological change and what that will mean for jobs and the unprecedented mass movements of people across borders, with all the pressures that can bring. And after the military interventionism at the beginning of the century, people question the rationale, and indeed legitimacy, of the use of force and involving ourselves in crises and conflicts that are not ours, while at the same time being repelled by the slaughter in Syria and our failure to end it.

Such doubts are entirely understandable; so too is the demand for leadership. Those of us who believe in inclusive societies and open economies have a duty to respond, learn the lessons of the past, meet people's concerns with practical actions, not beguiling illusions, and renew our confidence in the ideas and values that have done so much to benefit so many for so long. For be in no doubt, if we lack the confidence to step up, others will.

In the last century, whether in the rise of fascism or the spread of communism, we have seen those on the extreme right and extreme left exploit people's fears, stoke intolerance and racism, close down economies and societies and destroy the peace of nations. And today, once more, we see worrying trends in the rise of such movements in Europe and beyond. We have seen what happens when countries slide into authoritarianism, slowly crushing the basic freedoms and rights of their citizens. We have seen what happens when corrupt oligarchies rob their nations of the wealth, resources and human capital that are so vital to unlocking a brighter future for their citizens.

We have seen what happens when the natural patriotism that is a cornerstone of a healthy society is warped into aggressive nationalism, exploiting fear and uncertainty to promote identity politics at home and belligerent confrontation abroad, while breaking rules and undermining institutions. We see what happens when States like Russia flagrantly breach international norms — from the seizing of sovereign territory to the reckless use of chemical weapons on the streets of Britain by agents of the Russian GRU. We have to show there is a better way to meet the concerns of our people. That way lies in global cooperation between strong and accountable States based on open economies and inclusive societies. It is a way that ensures that strong nation States provide the bonds that bring citizens together and that power remains accountable to those it is there to serve; that celebrates free markets and has the confidence to reform them when they need to work better; and that demonstrates that delivering for one's citizens at home does not have to be at the expense of global cooperation and the values, rules and ideals that underpin that.

Indeed, cooperation and competition are not mutually exclusive. Only global cooperation based on a set of agreed rules can ensure competition is fair and does not succumb to protectionism, with its certain path to lost jobs and international confrontation. It is only global cooperation that can harness legitimate self-interest towards common goals, producing agreements on global challenges, such as climate change and proliferation, and increasing inclusive economic growth. We see that cooperation here today at the United Nations, as we also saw it at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting earlier this year. And here today, as Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, I deliver a clear statement on behalf of the Heads of Government of its 53 equal and independent member States. We reaffirm our shared commitment to working together within a rules-based international system to address shared global challenges and foster a fairer, more secure, more sustainable and more prosperous future. That commitment takes account of the special requirements of the least developed countries and of small and otherwise vulnerable economies and benefits all our citizens and the wider world.

But it is not enough for us merely to make the case for cooperation. We need action, at home and in the community of nations, to show how our ideas and values can deliver practical benefits for all our people in all parts of the world. We must recognize the legitimacy of people's concerns and act to build a global economy that works for everyone. We must invest in the patient

work of building open societies in which everyone has a stake in the future. And we must act to uphold the international rules-based system and stand up for our values by protecting those who may suffer when it is violated. Let me take each in turn.

First, we must respond to those who feel that the global economy is not working for them; the pace of globalization that has left too many people behind; the fear that our children and grandchildren may lack the education and skills to secure the jobs of tomorrow; and the risk that technological change could become a source of inequality and division rather than the greatest opportunity in history. In the United Kingdom we are driving investment in industries of the future to create new jobs, from low-carbon technologies to artificial intelligence. We are investing in education and skills so that workers are ready to make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead. And we are making sure people play by the rules so that business and innovation is celebrated for creating jobs, not demonized because of grievances over tax not paid or rights not respected.

While we strive to make our own economies work for all our people, we should do the same at a global level. In an increasingly global economy, it is not enough to ensure people play by the rules at home. We need global cooperation to set and enforce fair rules on trade, tax and the sharing of data. And those rules need to keep pace with the changing nature of trade and technology. We need to give the World Trade Organization a broad, ambitious and urgent mandate to reform. It must address the areas where it is not functioning effectively, deal with issues that are not currently covered and maintain trust in a system that is critical to preventing a return to the failed protectionism of the past.

Fair and respected rules are essential for business to flourish and drive growth. But recent history shows that that cannot be sustained without deeper partnerships among Governments, business, international financial institutions and civil society to ensure that growth delivers for everyone. That is why I recently visited Africa, along with British businesses, to promote trade and investment and encourage a new partnership based on shared prosperity and shared security. It is why at this General Assembly session I co-hosted an event with Prime Minister Trudeau, President Kagame and President Akufo-Addo, calling for more support for investment and job creation for young people on the continent. It is why the United Kingdom will maintain its commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of gross national income on official development assistance and put our development budget at the heart of our international agenda. We will do more to create jobs, improve skills and increase investment in emerging economies — in both our interests and theirs, for the best way of resisting protectionism is to ensure that this century is defined by open markets that really deliver for all our people.

Secondly, we must build countries, not only economies, that work for everyone: inclusive societies where every citizen has a stake in the future. Those are the firm foundations on which strong and accountable nations are built. History has consistently taught us that giving people a stake in society is the best way to ensure stability, security and economic growth. There is no one right way to do this. Every country must choose its own path, but the basic tenets are common across the world. They include a Government that is transparent and accountable, an independent judiciary to enforce the rule of law, free and fair elections and a free and open media. They also include freedom of expression, a right to redress, property rights that are reliably enforced, equality, freedom of thought, opinion, religion and conscience — all found in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed 70 years ago.

Those of us who believe in those tenets must set an example in defending and strengthening them at home and abroad. That is why we must call out hate speech, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all forms of prejudice and discrimination against minorities wherever we find it. Like many leaders, I suspect, I do not always enjoy reading what the media in my country writes about me. But I will defend their right to say it, for the independence of our media is one of my country's greatest achievements and it is the bedrock of our democracy.

So, too, will I defend objectivity and impartiality in the face of those who treat truth as just another opinion to be manipulated. This challenge has only become more complex with the rise in social media and online information. That is why we agreed at the Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in June to step up our efforts to respond to disinformation and why, together with our partners and with technology companies, we are leading efforts to reclaim the Internet from terrorists and others who would do us harm.

Just as we must stand up for the values that we adhere to, so we must support countries and leaders who

choose to take the often difficult steps towards a more inclusive society. The United Kingdom will use all the levers at its disposal to do so. Through our aid budget and commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, we will not only protect the most vulnerable, but also bolster States under threat and help others sustain their progress. Through global campaigns, we will help countries to end scourges such as modern slavery and sexual violence in conflict, and we will mobilize wider support through our alliances and membership of multilateral organizations — not only the United Nations, but also international financial institutions, the G-7, the Group of 20 and NATO.

Just as there is no single recipe for an inclusive society, so there is no single model for balancing the democratic demands of our public with the imperative to cooperate internationally. The vote by the British people to leave the European Union (EU) was not a rejection of multilateralism or international cooperation; it was a clear demand for decisions and accountability to lie closer to home. I believe the role of leadership in these circumstances is clear: it is delivering on the democratic wishes of our people and international cooperation, working with allies and partners in pursuit of our shared values.

Thirdly, we must have the will and confidence to act when the fundamental rules that we live by are broken. This is not about repeating the mistakes of the past by trying to impose democracy on other countries through regime change, but we should not allow those mistakes to prevent us from protecting people in the face of the worst violations of human rights and human dignity. We should not allow those mistakes to paralyse the international community when its long-established norms are violated. We should not let our inability to prevent some of the worst conflicts today stop us from making every effort to ensure they do not happen again in future. If we stand back, we allow the world to become divided into spheres of influence in which the powerful dominate the weak and in which legitimate grievances go unaddressed. This is not just a moral imperative — it is also a matter of self-interest, for when barbarous acts and aggression go unchecked, dictators and terrorists are emboldened.

We must therefore have the confidence to act. When the Syrian regime used chemical weapons on its people again in April, it was Britain — together with France and America — that took military action to degrade the Syrian regime's chemical-weapons capability and deter their use. Earlier this year, when Russia used a toxic nerve agent in a sickening attack on the streets of Salisbury, the United Kingdom, with our NATO, EU and other allies, took action, expelling over 150 Russian intelligence officers in the largest collective expulsion ever.

In Burma, following the damning report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, we should sow the same confidence to hold accountable those responsible for the appalling atrocities repeatedly inflicted by the Burmese military on the Rohingya, Shan and Kachin peoples since 2011. Similarly, we should gather evidence of Da'esh's crimes worldwide, show ensuring justice for their victims and deterring those who might conduct such crimes in the future. But accountability alone is not enough. We must do more collectively to prevent such atrocities in the first place and address the causes of instability that can give rise to them.

The United Nations has a critical role to play, and it has a wide range of levers to do so, from sanctions — which show the leaders of Iran and North Korea that they cannot act without consequence — to peacekeeping missions, such as that in South Sudan, which is helping to prevent suffering and the collapse of law and order. To be able to effectively use those levers, the Security Council must find the political will to act in our collective interest. United Nations agencies must deliver the reforms that the Secretary-General has started to become more agile, more transparent and better coordinated on the ground. To support those reforms, we must also ensure proper funding is targeted specifically at those parts of the United Nations that deliver results.

Seventy years ago, the General Assembly agreed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today we must renew the ideals and values on which that Declaration was founded. In doing so, we must learn the lessons of the past and show through our actions how cooperation between strong and accountable States with open economies and inclusive societies can best deliver security and prosperity for all our people. As Kofi Annan said at the start of his second term as Secretary-General,

> "I have sought to turn an unflinching eye to the failures of our recent past, in order to assess more clearly what it will take for us to succeed in the future." (*A/55/PV.105, p.3*)

In that spirit, let us show unflinching resolve to renew the promise of freedom, opportunity and fairness, a promise that has delivered for more people, in more places, than at any other period in our history. Let us ensure that promise can be fulfilled for our children and grandchildren and for every generation to come.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abdullah (Afghanistan): Allow me to start by extending my congratulations to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and wishing much success to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Let me also assure her that, by working with Member States and the United Nations family, we look forward to advancing the seven priorities set out in the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

From this rostrum, I would like to provide the General Assembly with the latest regarding the situation in Afghanistan and the gains, opportunities and challenges that my nation faces at this critical juncture, in addition to our views on other key global challenges.

The record of accomplishments by this institution over the past 73 years demonstrates that, wherever it might be and whoever it might impact, we cannot escape the ripple effect of, or de-link ourselves from, the global, national, communal and human connections that bind us, whether in relation to the environment, the climate, international finance or even the cyber and technology arenas. It is therefore critically important to go beyond just words, the duplication of effort or ineffective models that intermingle and, at times, spur countervailing or lopsided interests.

As Albert Einstein once said, "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them". Whether we are addressing hunger, acute poverty, climate change, overpopulation, terrorism, conflict, displacement, inequality or organized crime, we all share and own bits and pieces of the problem in the same way that we collectively benefit or learn from the solutions. As a result, we need to explore new means and identify new tools for reaching a wider consensus through more thoughtful dialogue and results-oriented actions.

To this day we do not have a globally and officially acceptable definition for terrorism, a nefarious phenomenon used by a rogue or politically connected criminal, State or non-State actor using religious, ideological, economic or psychological cover to disrupt the status quo, upend the global and nation State order and reach a particular set of radical goals through the sheer use of indiscriminate violence that no religion in its undistorted form condones.

While we are determined to fight with vigour against newer versions of terror presenting themselves as remnants of Da'esh in a few pockets inside Afghanistan, we are still struggling to fully comprehend the role that terror breeding grounds, sanctuaries and funding pools, in many cases tied to criminal and illicit drug networks, play in the use and spread of terrorism. We are still trying to figure out how to render terrorism impotent as a policy tool used by some to further specific agendas.

For example, for almost a quarter of a century, Afghanistan experienced the loss of tens of thousands of innocent lives and major infrastructural damage. It is partly due to geography and partly due to shortsighted strategies and regional agendas that have generated an umbilical reliance on non-State actors, used to keep others unstable through violence and the promotion of extremism. It has resulted in complacency and impunity; therefore, we need to do more and go beyond ineffective norms to bring about change and accountability. We have asked our neighbouring States, especially Pakistan, to help targeted societies, including their own, to deal with this menace. We are looking forward to the timely and effective implementation of

the recently agreed Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity.

All stakeholders need to agree to treat all shades of terrorism as one, shut down the breeding grounds and sanctuaries and prosecute or repatriate the violators. The response thus far has been sparse and insufficient. We are working with all countries, near and far, to bring about better results. On that basis, Afghanistan stands for the balanced implementation of all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and non-compliance must be seriously addressed as well. My country has also begun a process of structured cooperation with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. and we are supportive of regional initiatives through forums that focus on such priority concerns. We will continue to engage in work with regional stakeholders in that regard.

Since we last met, Afghanistan turned a page and made unprecedented overtures to the Taliban to be part of a credible, Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace process that could lead to a just and comprehensive political settlement through talks and reconciliation. On several occasions, we have pledged our commitment to unconditional intra-Afghan dialogue and the restoration of all rights and privileges for those who agree to end the cycle of violence. We even announced a unilateral ceasefire earlier this year, which was agreed to by the Taliban for a three-day period and gave Afghans a glimpse of what peace can look and feel like. Unfortunately, extraneous agendas prevented us from replicating a second ceasefire more recently, but we will not rest. We will have to pursue both what is right and attainable.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all nations, especially the United States, other concerned nations and parties — including the Governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and of Indonesia, both of which recently hosted United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) gatherings — the United Nations and others for encouraging all sides to set the stage for a process that would lead to talks and a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement. Looking at the 25-year record, a prerequisite for talks is to learn from the history of peace engagement. We see that a dual approach is necessary to make sure that we win peace, but also protect and preserve our people's gains and hard-earned achievements, which include constitutional order, freedom of expression, human and gender rights and creating economic opportunities.

I want to pause here and pay tribute to Afghans who continue to suffer as a result of violence, as well as to our valiant National Security Forces for their steadfast defence of our nation and for standing tall and strong on the front line against terrorism.

There are two important popular tests on the horizon for Afghanistan: parliamentary elections are slated for next month and presidential elections for next year. Drawing on past experiences, both President Ashraf Ghani and I agree that political legitimacy is derived from the will of the people. While we pursue peace efforts and deal with security and governance challenges, we are reminded that, given our circumstances, eventually we must make sure that the electoral process is trustworthy and that the electorate can agree to a fairly credible and legitimate outcome. Regardless of who wins or loses, Afghanistan's future rests on nurturing a national consensus that provides unity of purpose aimed at peace and political stability that derives legitimacy from foundations that are pluralistic, inclusive and democratic.

The President took the Chair.

In that regard, I wish to thank the United Nations — UNAMA in particular — the European Union and all other contributors and donors for helping us move the process forward. Furthermore, we look forward to the upcoming Geneva ministerial conference on Afghanistan in November. It will be an excellent occasion to evaluate our work and the path ahead since we last met with donors.

On the humanitarian front, Afghanistan also faces daunting tasks associated with an impending drought, refugee resettlement and internal displacement caused by climatic and national abnormalities, food insecurity and security threats. Those are estimated to impact two thirds of the country and the livelihoods of more than 4 million people. with the potential to force 1 million more into migration. We sorely need to attend to their humanitarian needs. I want to thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and donors for their contributions and hard work on the groun; however, we urge the international community to fully fund the 2018-2021 Afghanistan humanitarian response plan.

The peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of oppressed people are core principles of the Charter of the United Nations, benefiting the promotion

and preservation of international peace and security. As a war-ravaged country, we sympathize with and feel for the people of Syria, Yemen and other victimized communities around the world. Likewise, we stand for the basic right to protection for the Rohingya population in Myanmar. Afghanistan stands in full support of all United Nations and other international efforts aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, including the General Assembly's call for an international protection mechanism for civilians.

Moreover, United Nations peacebuilding activities should provide due focus on the principle of national ownership, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the promotion of greater coherence among the relevant United Nations entities and agencies working on development.

With regard to the reform agenda, we stand in full support of efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations in the context of the Secretary-General's initiatives. The establishment of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is a welcome move, as is the setting up of the Office of Counter-Terrorism. We look forward to the implementation of the resolution adopted on the repositioning of the United Nations development system and believe it will enhance our achievements in the establishment of One UN for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's active role within the United Nations system is currently more pronounced than ever. Our chairmanship of the Third Committee during the seventy-third session comes at a crucial time, as we have aimed to initiate and adopt several draft resolutions on shared themes, including victims of terrorism and the threat of improvised explosive devices, in addition to refugee and migrant issues, the rights of children, women's empowerment, human rights, social development and other relevant Committee agenda items.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's election to the Human Rights Council for the first time in 2017 marked our commitment and showcased our achievements in that regard. We remain party to major international protocols and conventions on human rights. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Afghanistan recently passed a set of national laws on prohibiting cruel and degrading treatment, endorsed the law on prohibiting torture and combating human and migrant trafficking and adopted a code prohibiting child recruitment into our security forces. With regard to the latter, we are working closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

I want to leave this rostrum by presenting a bold concept, also recently mentioned by President Ghani, that can form a new, visionary paradigm for my country and our region as we strive to end four decades of conflict and enter a new phase free of violence and the forced implementation of stagnant ideas and spoiler habits. It is a concept that dwells on Afghanistan becoming a platform of cordiality for regional and hemispheric cooperation over the next few years, in sharp contrast to being pushed and pulled towards becoming an area of instability and confrontation.

Our people, who pose no danger to anyone, are demanding a fundamental change in which they can play a constructive and collaborative role across boundaries and help turn their country into a roundabout of people, goods, services, communications, cooperation and ideas across the wider region. I believe that, with the help of the international community, we can turn this concept into a reality. I hope to further engage our regional partners in helping us bring this vision to fruition. I hope that the Assembly and all concerned Member States will play a supportive and positive role to put an end to years of agony and open up a new path leading to durable peace, stability and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Giuseppe Conte, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic.

Mr. Giuseppe Conte, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Giuseppe Conte, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Conte (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am honoured to take the floor today before the General Assembly, as the spokesperson for the will of the Government and the people, to confirm our commitment alongside, and in favour of, the United Nations. The international community needs a truly effective multilateralism and a United Nations that is strengthened in its role as a pillar of an international system based on peace, justice and equity. We therefore continue to support the reform plan of the Secretary-General, now more so than ever in the delicate implementation process that awaits him. We want a United Nations that is closer to the people, that is able to respond to their security and well-being needs and that is ready to protect them from the pitfalls of globalization, which offers many opportunities but can also produce errant effects.

The Italian Government has made those same priorities the basis of its action. Government action that does not give due consideration to ensuring that all of its citizens have equitable and fully dignified living conditions is not action that I can consider morally, much less politically, acceptable. When some accuse us of souverainism or populism, I always enjoy pointing out that article 1 of the Italian Constitution cites sovereignty and the people. It is precisely through that provision that I interpret the concept of sovereignty and the exercise of sovereignty by the people. That approach does not modify the traditional position of Italy within the international community and, consequently, towards the United Nations. Security, the defence of peace and the values that best preserve it, as well as the promotion of development and human rights, are goals that we share and shall continue to pursue with courage and conviction at the national and international levels.

On the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Italy expresses that will through its candidature to the Human Rights Council. Respect for the inviolable rights of humankind is one of the pillars on which the Italian Republic is founded — our beacon, especially today, when we are called upon to address the immense challenges of the grave and prolonged crises in the Euro-Mediterranean area, including migratory flows. For years, Italy has been engaged in search-and-rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea and has saved tens of thousands of people from death, often single-handedly, as has frequently been acknowledged by those who say that Italy has saved the honour of Europe.

The migratory phenomena we are facing require short-, medium-, and long-term responses from the entire international community that are structured and multi-level. It is on that basis that we support the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. This is a challenge that can, and must, be met through an approach of shared responsibility, in a logic of partnership between the countries of origin, transit and destination of the flows, while taking into account the priority need to guarantee the dignity of the individual, but also the firm determination to fight those who trample on that dignity and on life itself through human trafficking.

Italy pursues the goals of international peace and security including during times of budgetary constraints. We are solidly in eighth position as a contributor to the regular budget of the United Nations, and we supplement that commitment through development initiatives, both at the bilateral level and through United Nations agencies. Those initiatives are inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals inscribed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Poverty, inequality, unemployment and the devastating effects of climate change are ills that concern every country, independently of their level of development.

The logic of assistance must give way to a framework of mutual responsibility and partnership, as promoted by Italy — for example, on the African continent — so that each stakeholder can do their part to the best of their possibilities and abilities.

Italy is proud to be one of the main contributors to peacekeeping operations, a commitment we have maintained for many years and for which we have received the appreciation, essential to us, that comes first and foremost from the local communities in which we are operating.

Italy is a country whose very DNA contains the promotion of dialogue and inclusiveness in crisis situations. Those principles are essential when addressing the grave and widespread situations of instability that today characterize an area that is vital to the security and prosperity of Italy and Europe as a whole, namely, the greater Mediterranean.

In the upcoming weeks Italy will host a conference on Libya, the main goal of which will be to support a shared political path and contribute to the country's political stabilization. That path will foster the broadest possible involvement of Libyan stakeholders, who

remain the masters of their destiny. The United Nations will play a central role through the action plan, on which all the contributions of the main international and regional stakeholders will converge.

The long conflict that has roiled Syria for seven years demonstrates all the limits of military solutions. We have the duty to support the action of the United Nations and of Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan De Mistura.

Shared responsibility — in the framework of building peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies — is a call that we share and accept as an invitation to change. The same spirit of change characterizes the action of the Government that I lead. But we must also assume that responsibility towards the reform of the Security Council, in which Italy will continue to pursue its deep commitment, in dialogue with all Member States, to achieve the goal of a shared reform.

We should all aspire to the path to effective multilateralism. Nevertheless, that path cannot disregard the need for every member of the human family to recognize in the United Nations true global leadership, to which they look with renewed faith.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Giuseppe Conte, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 3 p.m.